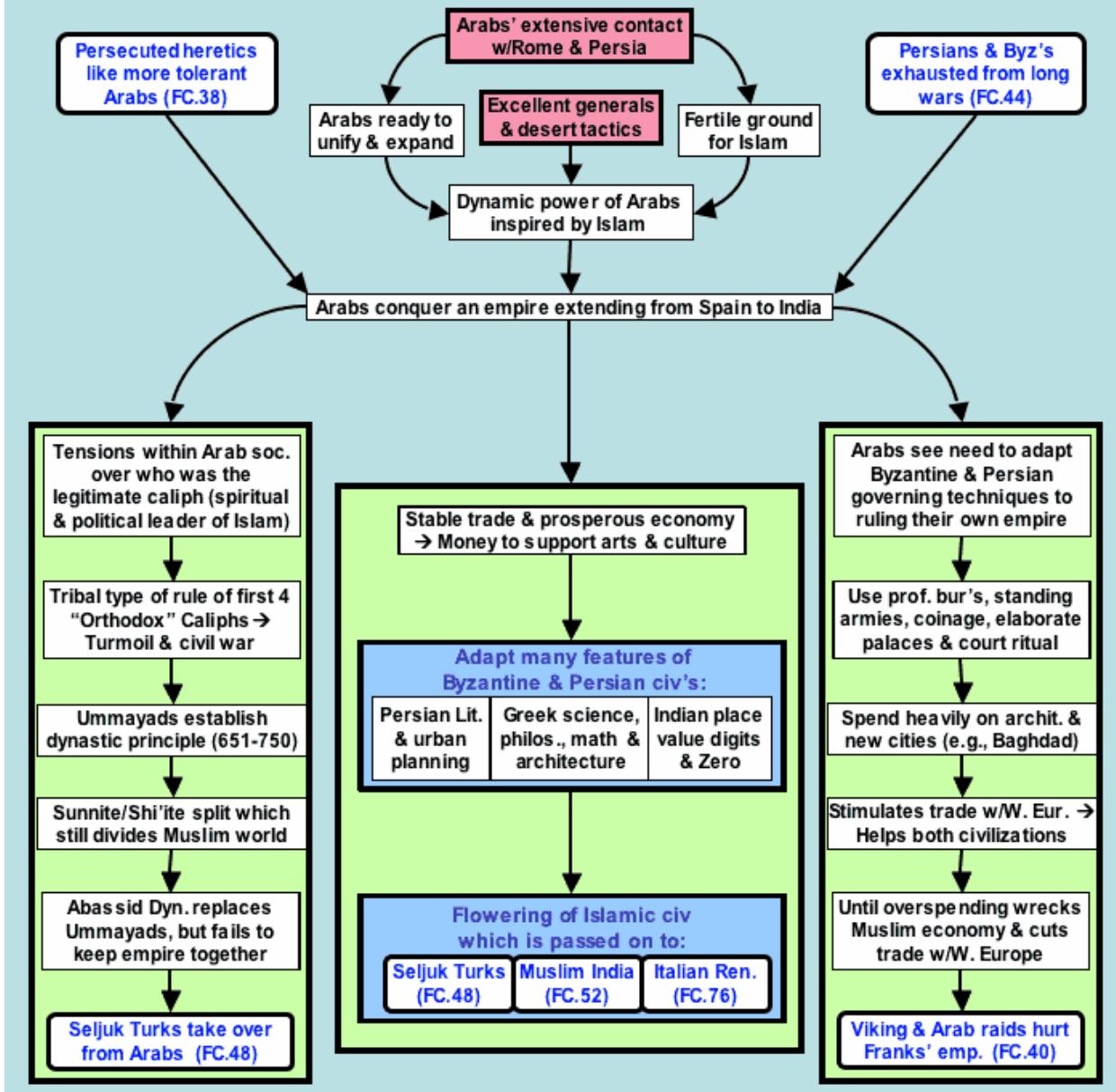


## **Classical Asia****Classical Asia to c.1800 C.E.: Islam, India, China, and Japan**

### **The Islamic World****Unit 6: The Islamic World**

**FC46****The rise of the Arabs & Islamic civilization (632 -c.1000)**

## FC.46 THE RISE OF THE ARAB MUSLIMS & THEIR IMPACT (632-c.1000)



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## The sweep of Empire (632-750 C.E.)

The death of Mohammed shocked many Arabs who had attributed divine qualities to the prophet. In order to ease their doubts, one of Mohammed's chief followers, Abu Bakr, addressed the crowd gathered in Mecca: "Whichever of you worships Mohammed, know that Mohammed is dead. But whichever of you worships God, know that God is alive and does not die." Then he quoted a passage from the *Quran*: "Mohammed is a prophet only; there have been prophets before him. If he dies or is slain, will you turn back?" Their nerves soothed and their faith reassured, the Arabs struck out on a path of conquest almost unparalleled in its scope and speed.

The civilizing influences filtering into Arabia from Rome and Persia had two effects combining to give the Arabs the dynamic energy for conquering an empire. For one thing, those influences made Arabia fertile ground in

which Islam could take root. Second, they helped the Arabs to unify and expand outward, especially when inspired by Islam, whose warriors believed that death in a holy war for the faith led to being transported instantly to Paradise. Add to this very capable leaders armed with the lightning fast tactics of the desert, and Islam's armies became the most potent forces of their day.

Two other outside factors also made the Arabs' rapid expansion possible. First, there was the degree of support, or at least non-resistance from the many Aramaic speaking peoples under Roman and Persian rule, since they felt much closer kinship to the Arabs than to their rulers. Also the Muslims were tolerant of Christians and Jews, charging only a special tax instead of forcing them to convert. This contrasted sharply with the harsher Byzantine policies against the Monophysite Christians in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. The second factor was timing. Both the Byzantine and Persian Empires were worn out from years of prolonged warfare against each other. Likewise, Visigothic Spain was suffering internal decay and was thus ready for a fall.

The Arabs' first victims were the Byzantines and Persians. At the Yarmuk River in Palestine they were facing a large enemy force when a sandstorm blew up in the Byzantines' faces. Taking this as a sign from God, the Arabs charged and destroyed the Byzantine army. Syria and Palestine, along with Jerusalem, a city Muslims also revere, fell into the Arabs' hands. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, resplendent in his finest robes, had to meet this rag tag army of desert nomads and personally lead their leader's horse into the city. Nothing could better symbolize the contrast between the wealthy civilized subjects and their new masters fresh out of the desert.

The Arab advance continued northward into Asia Minor toward Constantinople, a particularly prized goal for Muslims. Despite their desert origins, they rapidly built a navy (with the help of their newly conquered Greek and Phoenician subjects) with which they twice besieged Constantinople (674 and 717). In each case, the Byzantines' dreadful new weapon, Greek fire, helped save the city and empire. The Byzantines held fast, and a fairly stable frontier between Christianity and Islam gradually took shape in Asia Minor.

Sweeping westward the Arabs took Egypt with an army of only 4,000 men, following quickly with the conquest of North Africa. In 711 C.E., a small Muslim force crossed into Spain, where the Visigothic kingdom also crumbled before its onslaught. Storming into southern Gaul (France), the Arabs were finally stopped by the Franks at the Battle of Tours (733). Eventually a stable frontier formed in northern Spain between the Muslim and Christian worlds.

The Arabs also advanced eastward into Persia, which, also exhausted by prolonged war with the Byzantines, collapsed like a house of cards in 651. However, Persian culture would re-emerge as a major influence on Islamic civilization as it developed. In 711 C.E. (the same year Muslim forces entered Spain), the Arabs entered northwestern India and started to establish their power there. They also extended their rule into Central Asia and beat a Chinese army in a battle near the Talas River, which brought the Arabs a new type of product, paper, and helped establish Islam as the dominant religion in Central Asia. Thus, by 750 AD, after little more than a century, the Islamic Empire stretched from Spain in the west to north India and the frontiers of China in the east, the most far-flung empire of its day.

## **Adapting to empire**

In the year 640, a messenger brought news to the Caliph Omar in Mecca that his forces had taken Alexandria with its 4000 villas, 4000 baths, and 400 places of entertainment. To celebrate this victory, Omar had the messenger share a meal of bread and dates with him, the simple fare of desert nomads. However, as ill suited to ruling such an empire the Arabs may have seemed, contact with their civilized Persian and Byzantine subjects allowed them to adapt quite quickly. They had three things to do: decide who was to rule, set up a system of government to rule the empire, and absorb and adapt the older cultures they ruled to Islam.

## **The ruler**

The first problem was who should be *caliph*, the spiritual and secular successor to Mohammed. The first four caliphs were elected by a tribal council of elders and are referred to as the Orthodox Caliphs, ruling from 632 to 661 C.E. However, as the empire grew, this form of government became increasingly inadequate. In addition,

tribal and clan jealousies continued. Of the four Orthodox Caliphs, only one, Abu Bakr (632-634) died a natural death. Finally, the Umayyad clan took over and established the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750). From now on, the dynastic principle of one family choosing the caliph would dominate.

However, not everyone saw the Umayyads as rightful rulers. Some known as *Shiites* felt that only descendants of Ali, the last Orthodox Caliph and a member of Mohammed's family, should be caliph. Those who felt any Arab could be caliph were known as *Sunnites*. The Sunnite-Shiite split is still one of the major factors dividing the Muslim world today.

In 750 C.E., a revolt led by Abbas, a governor of Persia, overthrew the Umayyads and established the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1258). Abbas was a ruthless man who worked to exterminate the Umayyad clan to a man. He even invited eighty Umayyads to a banquet and had them murdered at the table, then covering the bodies so he could finish his meal in peace. One member of the clan did survive, Abd-al-Rahman, who barely escaped Abbasid agents to make his way across the Mediterranean through the use of disguises and trickery. He arrived in Spain and founded an independent Umayyad dynasty. This was the first crack in the unity of the Islamic state. It would never be unified again.

## Ruling the empire

From the start, the Umayyads saw that they must adapt Byzantine and Persian techniques for ruling their empire. Therefore, they instituted some major changes. They moved the capital from Mecca to a much more central location, Damascus in Syria. They created the first Muslim coinage. They also adapted Byzantine and Persian bureaucratic methods as well as the Persian system of relay riders for faster communication of news from the further parts of the empire.

The Abbasids continued Umayyad centralizing policies. Consequently, more and more Persians, Greeks, Jews, and other non-Arabs gained positions of responsibility, since they had the training and experience necessary for running the government. This signified more equality and less distinction between the Arab conquerors and their subjects, especially for those non-Arabs who converted to Islam. Even the Abbasid caliphs had less and less Arab blood in them, since few of them married Arab wives.

Nothing better shows these changes in Muslim government than the position and status of the caliph himself, which was modeled after the Persian concept of kingship. Although he still tried to advertise his religious functions by wearing the tattered robe of Mohammed upon occasion and styling himself as the "Shadow of God on earth", he was no longer a simple man of the people. Just getting an audience with him involved dealing with a multitude of officials. Upon approaching the throne, one prostrated himself, while the caliph remained out of sight, speaking to people through an elaborate screen that hid him from view. An executioner with drawn sword reminded one of the need to behave according to the strictest rules. This contrasted sharply with the Caliph Omar sharing his bread and dates with a messenger.

Exalting the caliph and keeping him hidden from view also isolated him from his people and the problems of his empire. As a result, the *vizier*, or prime minister, assumed more power and became the power behind the throne for the generally weak or disinterested caliphs. Later, *mamelukes*, slave bodyguards, also gained increasing power, virtually holding the caliph as a prisoner in his own palace.

Symbolic of the great changes going on in Muslim government and culture was the new capital the Abbasids built: Baghdad. Just as Constantinople was the crown jewel of the Christian world, so Baghdad became the same sort of gem for Islam. Its site in Mesopotamia was flanked by the Tigris River and various canals, thus making it easy to defend. Its central location also put the government in closer communication with the empire's far-flung provinces.

The form of the city shows the growing influence of Persian culture at court. Its layout was round in the Persian style, and had three sets of surrounding walls. The middle wall was the tallest, supposedly being 112 feet tall, 164 feet thick at the base, and 46 feet thick on top! Two highways split the city into four quadrants, each with a central market. The central part of the city was dominated by a great mosque and the caliph's palace, which was made of

marble with a golden gate and a massive green dome 120 feet in diameter. On top of the dome was a statue of a lancer. According to legend, this statue would point toward parts of the empire where there was trouble. Baghdad was supposed to be inhabited mainly by the caliph, his court, and government officials, but such a capital drew a large population from all over the empire, its population reaching, according to some estimates, as high as one and a half million.

At first, all these expenditures stimulated trade with Western Europe, which helped both the Arab and Frankish empires. Unfortunately, continued heavy spending by the caliphs on expensive palaces, court ritual, adorning such cities such as Baghdad, and patronizing culture and the arts drained the treasury, which in turn wrecked trade with Europe. With trade so disrupted, Vikings in Russia and the Baltic Sea and Arabs in the Mediterranean turned increasingly to raiding and piracy in the ninth and tenth centuries. This brought the Dark Ages to their lowest point in Western Europe.

## The development of Islamic Civilization

The period of roughly 750-1000 C.E. is known as a cultural golden age for Islam. During this period, the vigorous desert tribesman from Arabia assimilated the older cultures of the Near East and Mediterranean and infused new life into them.

The basis for such a golden age was the orderliness and resulting prosperity that Arab rule brought the empire from India to the Atlantic. The Arabs flourished as middlemen in a trade that involved silks and porcelains from China, gems and spices from India, slaves and gold from Africa, and slaves and furs from Europe. The stability and range of this trade are seen by a custom of writing letters of credit that would be honored in other cities of the empire. The Arab word for this, *sakk*, is the origin for our word "check". The Italian city-states would adopt these practices to become the premier centers of business in Europe in later centuries.

There were three main cultures the Arabs assimilated and fused into what we call Muslim civilization: Indian, Persian, and Greek. From India, the Arabs picked up two concepts essential to the evolution of mathematics: the place value digit and zero. Both of these were vital to being able to do much more complex calculations than the old system of using letters represent numbers.

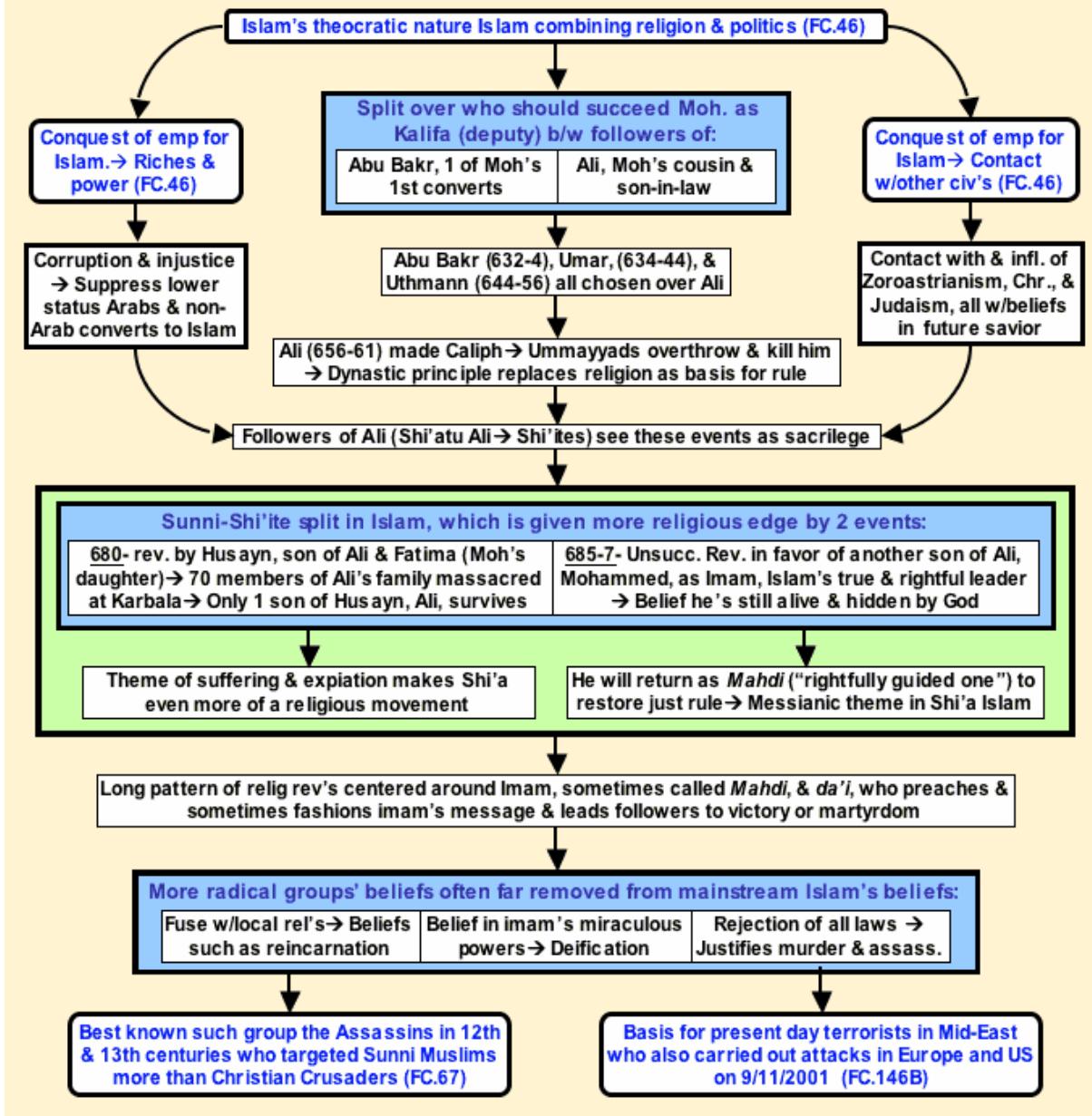
From the Persians, the Arabs inherited the full scope of Near Eastern cultures that extended back to the early days of Sumer. Much of Muslim art and literature was heavily influenced by Persia. The classic *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, with such tales as Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, dates from this period. Poetry also flourished, although it should be noted that the Arabs already had a strong poetic tradition before the conquests. Even such games as Backgammon, Chess, and Polo came to Islamic civilization by way of Persia.

The Greeks also contributed substantially to Muslim culture in the fields of philosophy, math, science, and architecture. Mohammed had said nothing wastes the money of the faithful more than building. However, the Muslims were great builders who owed much of their architectural skill and style to the Greeks. It takes little imagination to see the relationship between the dome of a Moslem mosque and the dome of a Byzantine church such as the Hagia Sophia.

Arab rule and civilization had important results by way of providing economic stability and the spread of civilization. In time, it would pass many of its ideas to India, modern Islamic culture, and even Western Europe where they would be instrumental in the flowering of culture known as the Italian Renaissance.

## FC46A The Origins of the Sunni-Shi'Ite Split

## FC46A THE SUNNI-SHI'ITE SPLIT & ROOTS OF TERRORISM IN ISLAM



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*"Verily the Lord has a sword sheathed in a scabbard as long as Uthman lives, and when Uthman is slain that sword shall be drawn and it will not be sheathed until the day of resurrection."*—Words attributed to Mohammed

**Beginning of the rift.** Soon after Mohammed's death in 632 C.E., the Islamic world suffered a religious/political schism that still constitutes the major divide among Muslims today: the Sunni-Shi'ite split. What made this so serious is the theocratic nature of Islam that combines religion and politics, where religious law, especially the Quran, rules state and society. This affected the Muslim world in three ways.

Two of them had to do with the Muslim Arabs' mission to spread Islam, resulting in the rapid conquest of a vast empire stretching from India to Spain. This, in turn, had two effects. One was the sudden accumulation of great power and riches by Arab leaders, who in many cases became corrupt and oppressed poorer Arabs and non-Arab converts to Islam. These conquests also brought the Arabs into increasing contact with and influence from

Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism, all religions with belief in a future savior.

Meanwhile, a split had arisen between followers of Abu Bakr, one of Mohammed's first converts, and Ali, the prophet's very pious cousin and son-in-law over who should succeed as Kalifa (AKA caliph, literally deputy). Abu Bakr (632-634) was chosen over Ali, followed by the puritanical and severe Umar (634-44). When a Christian slave murdered Umar, Ali was again passed up in favor of Uthman from the powerful Umayyad clan. As was accepted custom, Uthman appointed many of his relatives to high posts in the rapidly expanding empire. When complaints about one of those relatives' corruption came to him, a dispute broke out which ended in Uthman's murder by an angry mob. In the aftermath, Ali was chosen caliph. However, Muawiya, the governor of Syria, led Uthman's Umayyad relatives in revolt. In 661 Ali, last of what were known as the four Orthodox Caliphs, was murdered, and Muawiya founded the Umayyad dynasty (661-750) in his place.

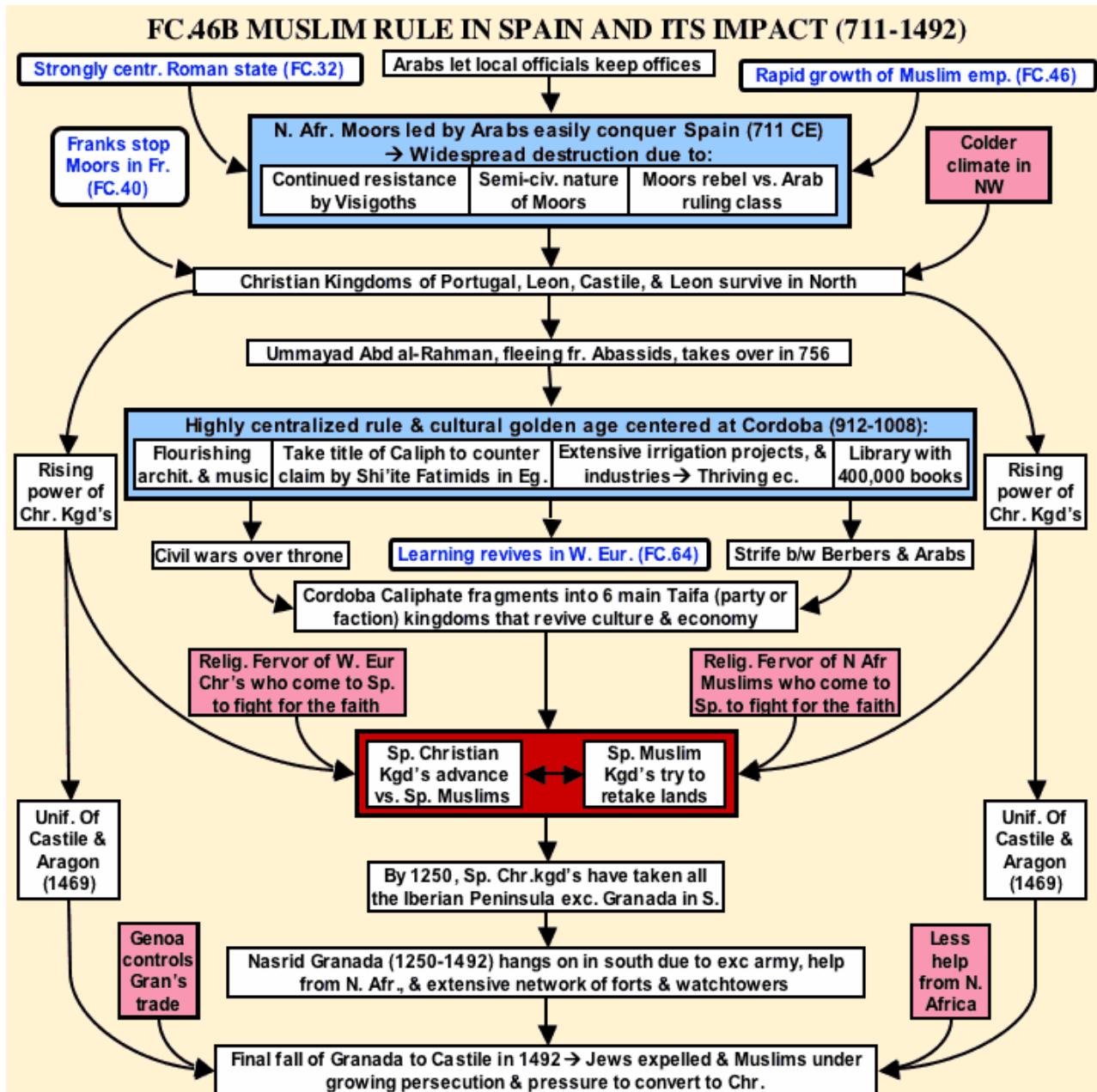
However, the dispute was far from over, because many Muslims believed Mohammed had designated that only his son-in-law, Ali, and his descendants should rule as imam (he who walks in front or guides). This, combined with growing discontent over Umayyad corruption and oppression, became the basis of the Sunni-Shi'ite split. Shi'a is the shortened form for Shi'atu Ali, meaning followers of Ali, while Sunni comes from Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah meaning "people of the example (of Muhammad) and the community".

Two events in the decades after Ali's death intensified the dispute. In 680 C.E., a revolt by Ali's son, Husayn, was put down when he and seventy other members of his family were massacred in the present-day Iraqi city, Karbala, making this the Shi'ites' holiest city after Mecca and Medina. Only one son of Husayn, Ali, survived this massacre. Five years later, Ali's oldest son, Hasan, failed in an attempted revolt against the Umayyads. Twelvers, the dominant branch of Shi'a Islam, believe that Ali, his two sons, Hasan and Husayn, and a succession of nine of Husayn's descendants are the Twelve Imams. Many Shi'ites believe the twelfth and last of these imams, Muhammed ibn al-Hassan, is still alive and hidden by God until his chosen time, when he will return as the mahdi (rightfully guided one) with Jesus to restore just rule to the earth. Shi'ites believe the imams possess supernatural knowledge directly from God and thus are infallible. Sunnis reject this claim.

The deaths of Husayn and Hasan have also given Shi'a Islam a theme of suffering and expiation. This has justified in many Shi'ites' minds a long pattern of revolutions centered on the da'l, preachers of the imams' message who lead their followers to victory or martyrdom. These have given rise to more radical groups, some with beliefs far removed from mainstream Islamic beliefs. At least one group incorporated local beliefs, such as reincarnation, into their own. Others have gone so far as to deify the imams, attributing to them miraculous powers. Some Shi'ites, by rejecting all, especially Sunni, law have justified such things as murder and assassination, which has been the cornerstone of beliefs for a number of terrorist groups. One of these groups, known as the Assassins, targeted Sunni Muslims and crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, murdering anyone who refused to pay them tribute. Our word, assassin, comes from hashish, which this group's followers would supposedly smoke before carrying out their political murders.

This is also the basis for present day resistance groups who, rightly or wrongly, are labeled terrorists. For example, Hezbollah ("Party of God") in Lebanon, which started out as a resistance group without a solid base, has over the years come to provide many of the social services, such as schools and hospitals for many Lebanese Shi'ites. Ironically, the main terrorist group and nemesis of the West since the 1990s, Al Qaeda, is Sunni. Today, Sunnis make up about two-thirds of the Muslim world, but Shi'ites predominate in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. Most Shi'ites are known as Twelvers, believing in the twelve imams, but there are various splinter groups, such as the Ismailis and Zaydi (Fivers) who believe in a different line of succession for the imams. Both Shi'ites and Sunnis revere the Quran as the revealed word of God.

## FC46B Muslim civilization in Spain (711-1492)



## The coming of the Moors

In the seventy years after the death of Mohammed in 632, the Arab Muslims conquered an empire that stretched from the borders of India in the East to the Atlantic coast of North Africa in the West. In 711, an Arab general, Tariq, was sent into Spain with a force of unruly North African Berbers (from the Roman word for barbarians). Tariq, after whom the Rock of Gibraltar was named (from Jebel Tariq, the Rock of Tariq), decisively defeated the Visigoth king Roderic in 712, after which the Moors, as the Arab-led Berbers were called, overran the rest of the peninsula by 720.

Several factors aided the rapid Muslim conquest of Spain. First, despite the hilly and fragmented nature of Spain's geography, the Romans had succeeded in creating a tightly knit and romanized province (both politically and culturally). Rome's Visigothic successors carried on these traditions, thus giving the Moors a fairly unified state

whose government largely fell into their hands after one decisive battle, much as England fell to the Normans after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. A very different, but complementary factor was the de-centralized nature of Roman (and Visigothic) rule, where local nobles who copied Roman culture and showed loyalty to the empire, were allowed to run their cities or regions for Rome. There is evidence the Moors avoided prolonged sieges by confirming these local officials in their positions in return for their loyalty. Therefore, there was often little more than a change of management at the top that many people might not have even noticed.

By the same token, the Moorish conquest and its aftermath to c.800 seem to have been a fairly destructive and chaotic period in Spanish history for several reasons. For one thing, there was some resistance by the king and his nobles who lost their lands to Tariq's followers. Secondly, the Berbers who made up the bulk of the conquering army, were still unruly tribesmen and, for the most part, only superficially Muslim. Thus they often plundered and destroyed at will. Finally, although all Muslims were supposedly equal, the Arab rulers and officers treated the Berbers as second class citizens, taking the best lands and lions' share of the plunder for themselves. This triggered a Berber revolt and period of turmoil (c.740-90).

This anarchy allowed the survival of the Christian states in the north, the most prominent of which would evolve into Portugal and Leon in the west, Castile in the middle, and Aragon in the east. Likewise, the Franks, who had turned back the Moors at Tours in 733, entered northern Spain in 778 under Charlemagne, supposedly to help the city of Sargasso. Although this expedition failed, Charlemagne's son, Louis I established a more permanent Frankish presence and military frontier, the Spanish March, in the northeast. This helped knit strong cultural ties with Catalonia, centered around Barcelona, which has maintained its own Catalan culture and language (a mixture of French and Spanish) and still harbors designs for political independence, much like the Basques do in the northwest.

## **The Ummayad Caliphate of Cordoba (c.800- 1008)**

During this time, Abd al-Rahman, the lone survivor of the Ummayad Dynasty in the East after the Abassid Dynasty's bloody coup, had escaped to Spain and gradually extended his control there (756-88). The Ummayads always had trouble maintaining firm control of their frontier regions, which were remote, turbulent, less wealthy and sparsely populated. This forced them to give more freedom and power to their military governors so they could defend the frontiers against the constant raiding that created a virtual no-man's-land between the Christian and Moorish realms.

However, under Abd al-Rahman III (912-61), al-Hakem II (961-76) and the viziers al-Mansur and his son Abd al-Malik ruling for the weak Hisham II (976-1009), the Ummayads established some degree of control over the frontiers and presided over the height of Muslim power in Spain. In 929, they even took the title of Caliph, spiritual and secular ruler of the Islamic world, most likely in reaction to the Shiite Fatimids in North Africa claiming that title by right of descent from Mohammed's daughter, Fatima. The Ummayads also moved their capital from the old Visigothic center, Toledo, to Cordoba, where they built one of the Islamic world's most splendid mosques and a magnificent palace complex. This palace had 140 Roman columns sent from Constantinople, a menagerie, extensive fishponds, and a room with a large shallow bowl of mercury that, upon shaking, reflected light wildly around the room like lightning in order to impress and terrify visitors. The court was also a flourishing center of culture, especially after the renowned Arab musician, Ziryab was attracted there from the East, bringing with him the latest in fashionable foods, clothing, and personal hygiene, most notably toothpaste. Cordoba was famous for its extensive library with 400,000 books and may have had a population of 100,000, making it one of the most splendid cities in the world at the time.

At this time, a growing number of Christians started coming from Northern Europe to absorb the growing body of knowledge stored in Cordoba, taking back such things as the abacus, astrolabe, Arab math and medicine, and translations of Aristotle. This transmission of Arab learning from Spain would be the basis for the revival of learning in Western Europe in the following centuries.

By 950, the population of Moorish Spain was largely Muslim, since as many as one million Berbers may have migrated to Spain and many Spanish Christians converted to Islam, either out of conviction, the influence of friends and family, or the improved opportunities such conversion might bring. Evidence for these conversions

comes from the large number of Arab genealogies, which often show a point where Christian names are replaced by Arabic ones, indicating their conversion to Islam. Another source of converts was slaves, largely Slavs brought from Eastern Europe by Viking traders. These were often converted to Islam and trained as slave bureaucrats or bodyguards (although slaves with much higher status than the average subject). The caliphs in Cordoba had as many as 60,000 such recruits in their army, which largely freed them from dependence on unreliable Berber recruits.

Maintaining such a splendid court, capital, and army required a vibrant economy, which seems to have recovered in general across the Mediterranean after 750 and particularly in Spain after the turmoil of the 700s. Spain's agriculture especially flourished, from such new crops as rice, hard wheat for pasta (which required less water and stored better as a result), sorghum, sugar cane, cotton, oranges, lemons, limes, bananas, pomegranates, figs, watermelon, spinach, and artichokes. Figs, which were a Byzantine monopoly, supposedly reached Spain by smuggling seeds wrapped in a book past the customs agents. Making this "green revolution" possible were extensive irrigation and waterwheel systems copied from Syrian models, the largest being around Valencia. There were reportedly 5000 waterwheels along the Guadalquivir River alone by 1200.

Better agriculture produced a healthier and more numerous population, which allowed the government to lower tax rates, which in turn promoted more innovation, thus creating even better agriculture, and so on. This, of course, allowed and encouraged urban growth and more industries, such as metals, ceramics, glass, silk, ivory carving, paper and book making, woolens, and dying with dyes imported from as far away as India. One indication of Moorish Spain's prosperity at this time was government revenue, which reached 6,500,000 gold dinars a year.

## **Fall of the Caliphate of Cordoba and rise of the Taifa, or "Party kings" (1008-c.1080)**

After the death of the powerful vizier, Abd al-Malik, a period of civil wars and strife known as the *Fitnah*broke out (1008-31). Various claimants to the throne had to rely on Berber mercenaries, who claimed lands and provinces for their services. As a result, a string of caliphs rapidly followed one another, one supposedly reigning for only forty-seven days. In 1013 Cordoba was sacked and its library destroyed by Berber troops who, resenting their inferior status under the Arabs, saw no reason to preserve their culture. While the government disintegrated at the center, Christian princes in the north raided and conquered Muslim lands or extorted tribute from local rulers.

This chaos led to a fragmentation of power into some three dozen city-states known as the *Taifa*(literally party or factional rulers, although our other meaning for party might also apply). Gradually, the smaller taifas were gobbled up by the larger ones, leaving six main ones: Seville and Granada in the south, Badajoz, Toledo, and Valencia in the middle, and Zaragoza in the northeast. Once affairs settled down and stabilized, there was a rapid revival of the economy and culture. However, rather than being concentrated at one central court, culture was dispersed and localized in a number of taifa states. Taifa rulers' status, much like that of princes in Renaissance Italy, rested as much on which scholars and artists they could attract to their courts as it did on warfare and conquest.

The richest of the taifa states was Seville in the lower valley of the Guadalquivir River, specializing in its olive oil, crimson dye made from a beetle, sugarcane, and musical instruments. Its rulers, al-Mu'tadid (1042-69) and his grandson, al-Mu'tamid, took Seville to the height of its cultural prestige and political power (even recapturing Cordoba from the Christians in 1069), and were themselves accomplished poets.

Meanwhile, the Christian states of Aragon-Catalonia in the east, Castile-Leon in the middle, and Portugal in the west were attacking and extorting tribute from the various taifa states. Such tribute was a major, if not the main, source of revenue for these princes who, in turn, passed it on to their soldiers, nobles, churchmen, and merchants, making it a vital part of their economies. Joining in this were Muslim and Christian mercenaries who would fight for either side, depending on the pay and circumstances. The most famous of these was Rodrigo Diaz, known as El Cid (from the Arabic word for boss). During his very active career, Diaz served Castile (until he was exiled from there), the Muslim ruler of Zaragoza (fighting both Christians and Muslims), and Castile again until another falling out with its ruler. Having built up his own fortune, reputation and following, he fought, plundered, and extorted tribute from both Christians and Muslims until he took Valencia in 1094, where he ruled until his death in 1099.

## Islamic resurgence from North Africa: the Almoravids & Almohads (1080-1250)

Just as the Moors had originally come from North Africa and constantly drawn upon its Berber tribesmen for settlers and soldiers, so they drew renewed strength from two more North African groups to stem the tide of Christian conquest. The first of these, the Almoravids, were led by ibn Yasin, who had founded a *ribat*, a frontier religious community with a strong military character since it must be able to defend itself, and spread Islam through preaching and charity. As ibn Yasin's movement grew, it came to be called the Almoravids (from *al-Murabitun*, meaning people of the *ribat*). They founded Marrakech as a base in 1060 and took over Morocco by 1083.

They then turned toward the taifas in Spain which they saw paying tribute to non-Muslims, not recognizing the authority of the caliph in Baghdad, and failing to abide by the Muslim ban on drinking wine. In 1085 when the ruler of Castile took over Toledo, several alarmed taifas called the Almoravids into Spain for help. In 1086, the Almoravids crushed Castile's forces and embarked on a series of campaigns (c.1100-1125) to recover lands recently lost to the Christians. If the Almoravids were intolerant of any breaches of Islamic law by fellow Muslims, they were even less tolerant of Jews and Christians. From this point on we see growing hostility between Christians and Muslims who used to tolerate each other. Add to this aggressive Christian princes desperate to recover the lost revenue from tributes cut off by the Almoravids and a Church reform movement that wanted to channel the military energies of Europe's nobility into campaigns, such as the wars in Spain and the Crusades, to serve its own interests, and one can see a growing strain of intolerance that would plague Spain for centuries.

Arrogance toward other Muslims, growing indulgence in the very luxuries they had originally condemned, and the re-emergence of Berber tribal loyalties led to Almoravide decline after 1125. However, a new group of North African reformers emerged to take their place, the Almohads (from *al-Muwahhidun*, upholders of divine unity). Founded by Muhammed ibn Tumart, their career seemed to parallel that of the Almoravids, starting with a *ribat* and winning over the local tribes with their own brand of religious fervor. One major difference between the two movements was that the Almohads believed in a more mystical unity of God in which all of us are immersed. In 1121, ibn Tumart was declared the *Mahdi* (rightly guided one) by his followers to restore righteousness in the final days before the Last Judgment. At this time, the Christian princes were taking advantage of a new period of turmoil (sometimes referred to as The Second Fitnah) by conquering more lands. In 1146, Alfonso VII of Castile briefly took Cordoba before losing it again. The following year, Alfonso I of Portugal took Lisbon with the help of an English navy, marking the start of a long friendship between those two countries. Consequently, a Sufi leader, ibn Qasi, called in the Almohads who took over the Almoravids and attacked the Christian states, inflicting a crushing defeat on them at Alcaros in 1195. This served as a wakeup call to the Christian states, which united against the Almohads and stopped them decisively at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212.

In the ensuing forty years (1212-52) nearly all the Iberian Peninsula came under the three Christian states of Portugal, Aragon, and Castile. Fernando III of Castile took Cordoba in 1236, and Seville fell to him in 1248 after a grueling siege. In the latter case, he ejected the surviving population and replaced it with Christians. A later elegy on the fall of Seville by the poet ar-Rundi seemed to bemoan the fate of Muslim Spain in general:

Ask Valencia what became of Murcia,  
And where is Jativa, or where is Jaen?  
Where is Cordoba, the seat of great learning,  
And how many scholars of high repute remain there?  
And where is Seville, the home of mirthful gatherings  
On its great river, cooling and brimful with water?  
These cities were the pillars of the country:  
Can a building remain when the pillars are missing?  
The white wells of ablution are weeping with sorrow,  
As a lover does when torn from his beloved:  
They weep over the remains of dwellings devoid of Muslims,  
Despoiled of Islam, now peopled by infidels!  
Those mosques have now been changed into churches,

Where the bells are ringing and crosses are standing.  
 Even the mihrabs weep, though made of cold stone,  
 Even the minbars sing dirges, though made of wood!  
 Oh heedless one, this is fate's warning to you:  
 If you slumber, Fate always stays awake.

## Nasrid Granada and the end of Moorish power in Spain (c.1250-1492)

By the mid thirteenth century, Moorish power in Spain was confined to a thin mountainous strip of land in the south that was never more than sixty miles wide. In the 1230s and 1240s, Muhammed ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr established a state centered around the city of Granada, thus giving his name to its ruling dynasty (Nasrid). Granada's strength was undercut by two main factors. First of all, it suffered from a good deal of internal disunity caused by tribal divisions, the ever-troublesome Berber mercenaries from North Africa, and an influx of Muslim refugees from the north. Second, it had a weak economy caused by its poor soil, forcing it to import much of its food, while its trade was largely controlled by Genoese merchants. Also, heavy tribute to the Christian states in the north forced the amirs (rulers) of Granada to charge high taxes, which made them unpopular.

Granada's survival depended on several factors: an excellent army consisting largely of Berber light cavalry, an extensive system of castles every five or six miles along its frontier and as many as 14,000 watchtowers scattered across the countryside, strong support from the Merinid dynasty in North Africa, generally capable rulers until the early 1400s, and some luck, such as the intervention of the Black Death (1349), Castilian involvement in the Hundred Years War in the 1300s, and turmoil both within and between the various Christian states.

Despite its problems, culture flourished in Nasrid Granada, especially in the fields of poetry, architecture, and art. The most remarkable example of this is the Alhambra, probably the best surviving example of a medieval Muslim palace. Much of its beauty lies in its elegant gardens, fountains, and courtyards that provided a serene setting for meditation, reading, or romance. The rooms of the palace itself show Islamic decorative art at its peak, with intricate geometric designs gracing the walls, doorways, and ceilings. According to the poet, Ibn Zamrak:

“...The Sabika hill sits like a garland on Granada's brow,  
 In which the stars would be entwined,  
 And the Alhambra (God preserve it)  
 Is the ruby set above that garland.  
 Granada is a bride whose headdress is the Sabika, and whose adornments are its flowers.”

In the 1400s, Granada's luck ran out in several ways. Genoese control of its trade tightened, which further aggravated resentment caused by the high tax rates (three times that paid by the people in Castile) to pay tribute to the Christians. The Merinids in North Africa went into decline and could no longer provide Granada their support. Tribal strife within Granada increased while the Christian states of Portugal, Castile, and Aragon resolved their own internal problems. In 1469, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile married, thus uniting Spain into one powerful state when they ascended their respective thrones in 1474. The only missing piece of the puzzle, in their minds, was Granada, which they attacked in 1482. The war boiled down to a series of sieges, as one city after another fell to the Christian artillery. In 1492, after an eight-month siege, Granada fell to Ferdinand and Isabella, who accepted the surrender dressed in Moorish clothes. After nearly 800 years, Spain was again united under Christian rule.

For Spain's Jewish and Moorish subjects, Christian rule was anything but pleasant. Almost immediately, the Jews were expelled from Spain, thus depriving it of some of its most productive population. Despite Ferdinand and Isabella's promise to tolerate their religion, the Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity or leave Spain in 1502. Since emigration was so costly, most converted in name while secretly maintaining their own beliefs and practices. In 1568, Philip II, increasingly concerned about his image as a strict Catholic monarch and support the Moriscoes (Moors supposedly converted to Christianity) might give to the Ottoman Turks and his other Muslim enemies, tried to stamp out their Muslim customs, which triggered a revolt. After brutally suppressing this uprising Philip dispersed the Moriscoes across Spain. However, since they still refused to assimilate into Christian society, Philip III took the final step of expelling some 300,000 Moriscoes from Spain in 1609. Aside from the suffering it

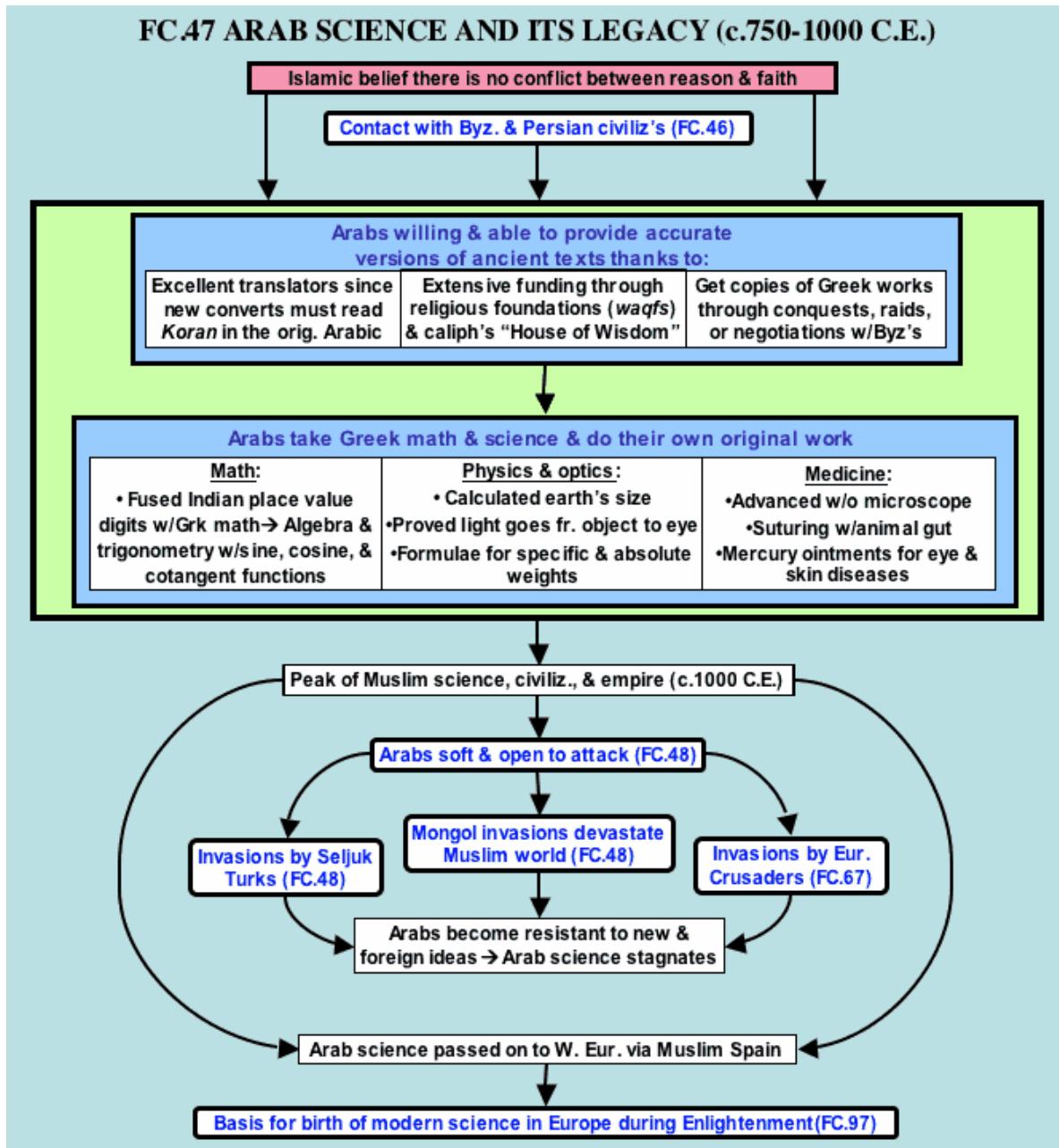
caused the Moriscoes, this also substantially hurt Spain, by ridding it of much of its most productive population just when its power and wealth in other quarters were going into decline. This only accelerated Spain's decline into the rank of a second rate power by the mid 1600s.

## Moorish Spain's legacy

As discussed previously, many Christian scholars during the Middle Ages came to Spain to absorb its learning, helping trigger a revival of learning in Europe. Very simply, this was the single most important legacy of Moorish Spain to Europe. One of its most significant contributions came from the philosopher, ibn Rushd (known in Europe as Averroes), who devoted his life to reconciling faith and reason (in particular that of Aristotle). The Christian philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, whose book, *Summa Theologica*, similarly reconciled faith and reason, quoted ibn Rushd no less than 503 times in his works. It was Aquinas' work that laid the foundations for the Renaissance and the birth of Western science in the centuries to come, but in a very real sense, it was the work of an Arab scholar, ibn Rushd, that was the real foundation.

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## FC47Arab math and science to c.1000



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The flow of history sometimes takes some devious twists and turns in its course of events. Such is the case with our own modern science, which received its legacy of Greek science and math not directly from the Greeks, but by way of Islam. Indeed, one of Islam's greatest cultural legacies was the preservation of Greek philosophy, math, and science. Islam and the rise of the Arab empire affected Arab math and science in two ways. First of all, rather than rejecting ancient Greek learning, Muslim culture remained quite open to it. The story goes that the caliph al-Ma'mun had a dream where the Greek philosopher Aristotle assured him that there was no conflict between reason and faith. This revelation led al-Ma'mun to start gathering the works of the Greek philosophers. Second, the rise of their empire directly exposed the Arabs to Byzantine and Persian cultures that still carried on ancient scholarship. Therefore, the Arabs were both willing and able to absorb Greek math and science.

There were three things the Arabs needed to do: get copies of the Greek texts, translate them, and provide funding for these endeavors. As far as getting the books was concerned, many of them had fallen into Arab hands through

conquest. However, there were still many texts that they needed. Sometimes they would negotiate with the Byzantines for copies of these books. At other times, raids into Byzantine territory would actually be aimed at seizing such works along with more material plunder.

Once these works had been gathered, the Arabs needed to translate them into Arabic. Luckily, Islam attracted a large number of converts, among them many men educated in Greek. However, since the *Koran* at that time was written only in Arabic, new converts had to learn that tongue in order to read Islam's holy book. As a result, Islam's appeal created a number of brilliant translators.

Funding largely came from the caliphs themselves. Caliph Ma'mun founded a palace learning center known as the House of Wisdom where many of the most brilliant minds of the age were gathered to translate Greek works and then add to this knowledge. The budget for the House of Wisdom was 500 gold dinars a month, with fifty-seven translators working there at one point. The translator, Hunayn, was supposedly paid the weight of his translated books in gold.

All this led to a level of scholarship that was unsurpassed in its day. Since books were hand written, and thus prone to a growing number of mistakes as each generation of books was copied, the translators would gather as many copies of a particular book as they could. They would then compare these texts to see which was probably closest version to the original text. Just compiling such critical texts alone was one of Islam's greatest legacies to us.

Starting with this excellent base of Greek knowledge, the Arabs made their own advances in the fields of Mathematics, medicine, and physics. Since Islam also encompassed part of India, its math was assimilated into the larger body of mathematical knowledge and passed on to us. The Indians came up with two very valuable concepts that simplify math for us immensely: place value digits and zero. As brilliant as Greek math was, it did not have these two tools, thus severely limiting what it could accomplish, since any math using Roman numerals is extremely cumbersome. Because of such limits, Greek math excelled in geometry, which could function better than other branches of math without place value digits and zero. Even proofs in non-geometric math were done with the brilliant use of geometric figures to illustrate problems.

The Muslims embraced Greek geometry wholeheartedly. One need only look at Islamic art and architecture to see their fascination with various geometric shapes and the ingenious things they could do with them. The religious ban on portraying the human figure certainly spurred Muslim art to excel in this direction.

However, the Muslims did not just slavishly copy the Greeks. Rather, they made their own original contributions in the fields of mathematics, medicine, and physics. Equipped with the Indian place value digits and zero, they developed trigonometry and first clearly defined sine, cosine, and cotangent functions. They further developed algebra (from the Arabic, *al-jabr*, which means "the missing"). The mathematician al-Khwarizmi wrote the first textbook on algebra and was probably the first to solve quadratic equations with two variables. In future centuries his textbook would be the basis for European algebra. It has been said that science is always pushing against the frontiers of math. If that is true, then the Muslim mathematicians certainly allowed those frontiers to be expanded considerably.

As advanced as Islamic math and science were for their day, we should keep in mind that scientists then were not specialized in the way scientists today are. For example, the translator Qusta ibn Luqa wrote on such topics as politics, medicine, insomnia, paralysis, fans, causes of the wind, logic, dyes, nutrition, geometry, astronomy, etc.

The Arabs also excelled in medicine. The great physician al-Razi, or, as he was known in Europe, Rhazes (865-923), correctly differentiated between the symptoms of small pox and measles and showed that diagnosis on the basis of examining a patient's urine was not very useful. He also used animal gut for suturing wounds and developed mercurial ointments for treating skin and eye diseases. Keep in mind that the accomplishments of Muslim science were done without the microscope. Not until that was invented in the 1600's would scientists be able to see microbes and understand the real causes of most diseases. This makes Muslim medicine seem all the more remarkable.

Al-Rhazi also knew how to use psychological treatment. It is said that he was once commissioned to cure a caliph stricken with paralysis. He took the caliph to a cave and threatened him with a knife. The enraged caliph got up and chased al-Rhazi out of the cave and into exile. Al-Rhazi later sent a letter explaining that was the treatment, and the caliph subsequently rewarded the physician.

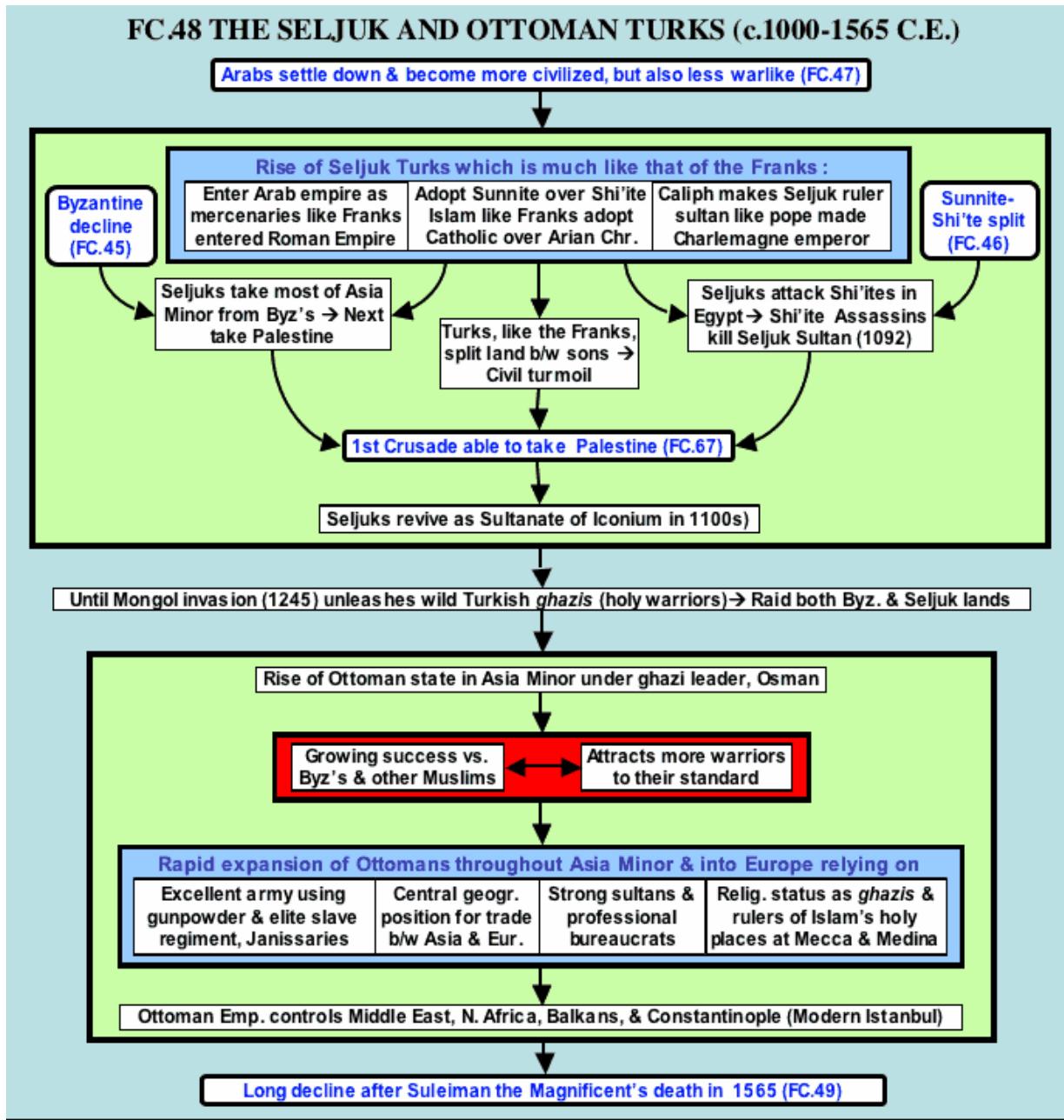
Muslim scientists also made advances in physics and optics, anticipating later European theories on specific gravity and developing formulae for figuring specific and absolute weights of objects. They calculated the size of the earth to an unprecedented degree of accuracy, though they still followed Aristotle in their belief in the geocentric (earth centered) universe. Muslim scientists disproved the Greek theory that light emanates from the eye to the object perceived. Ibn al-Hathān showed this theory was wrong by studying how light is refracted through water.

Muslim civilization peaked around 1000 C.E. But, as with other civilizations, a higher level of culture tended to make the Arabs soft and open to attack. Also, Arab civilization was also running into problems of internal decay that triggered two waves of invasions. First came the Seljuk Turks out of Central Asia. Although they did adopt Islam & restore some of its unity, the arrival of these Asiatic nomads initially had a somewhat disruptive effect on Arab culture and its attitudes toward the outside world. Even more upsetting in this respect were the Crusades, wars of conquest waged by Christians from Western Europe to recover Palestine for their faith. Unlike the Turks, the Crusaders were not about to convert to Islam and were much more hostile toward and destructive of Arab civilization, especially in the early years of the crusading era. Finally, the most destructive invasions of all came from the Mongol onslaught in the 1200's. The wholesale massacres of populations and destruction of cities that they committed dealt a terrible blow to Islamic civilization. These invasions were such a shock to the Arabs that Muslim culture became much more resistant to new ideas and foreign influences, making it more conservative and inward looking.

This helped cause a religious reaction against putting too much emphasis on science and reason and too little emphasis on faith. Except for the House of Wisdom, science and learning were largely supported by religious institutions and thus subject to their conservative influences. Also there arose a mystical movement known as Sufism, which discredited learning and reason, believing in a more direct and mystical experience with God. From this point on, Muslim science and math started to stagnate.

However, Islamic science spread to Western Europe and survived. By the 1100's, translations of Arabic texts were making their way from Muslim Spain into European universities. These Arab texts stimulated the growth of Western science, which is the dominant scientific tradition today. We should never lose sight of the fact that our own science today rests squarely on the accomplishments of Muslim science, which, as a result, is still very much alive.

## **FC48The rise of the Seljuk & Ottoman Turks (c.1000-1565)**



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## The Seljuk Turks

Although Islam experienced a golden age under the Abbasids, the empire gradually fell apart as the Arabs became less warlike and one province after another broke away. Weak caliphs under the power of mameluke bodyguards, the size of the empire, and the disaffection of Shiites and various ethnic groups all led to this disintegration. Fortunately for Islam, a new people came in to revitalize it: the Seljuk Turks.

Various Turkish tribes had been known for centuries from the borders of China to the borders of Islam. Fortunately, the Persians and the Arabs had held them in check. Instead of overwhelming the empire, these Turkish tribesmen, infiltrated it, coming in as mamelukes and mercenaries whom the Arabs relied on more and

more, much as the Romans had relied on Germanic troops. An even more interesting parallel is between the most successful Germanic tribe in Europe, the Franks, and the most successful Turkish tribe in Islam, the Seljuks.

The Seljuk Turks, named after a semi-legendary leader and founder, were the first Turkish tribe to convert to Sunnite Islam, thus gaining the favor of the civilized population in much the same way as the Franks' conversion to Catholic Christianity had made them more popular with their subjects. The Seljuks also came to the aid of Islam's spiritual leader, the caliph, who was under the thumb of a Shiite dynasty known as the Buwayids, much like the Franks under Pepin and Charlemagne had protected the Pope from similar difficulties. And in each case, the spiritual leader granted his protectors the title and responsibility for defending the faith. In the case of the Seljuks, their leader Toghril was made king, or *sultan*, of the East and West in 1058 with the job of restoring the political and religious unity of Islam.

Because of their dual mission to unify Islam and expand its frontiers, the Seljuks turned against the Shiite dynasty of the Fatimids in Egypt and Palestine and also against the Christian Byzantine Empire (much as Charlemagne had waged campaigns for Christianity in Spain and Saxony). One reason for these wars was to divert the ever-growing number of wild Turkish tribesmen away from destroying fellow Muslims and towards waging the holy war outside its borders. Because of their ongoing decline, the Byzantines were the ideal target, although the Shiite Fatimid dynasty in Egypt was also a useful target. In each case Seljuk victories triggered a backlash.

In 1071, the Seljuks and Byzantines met in the Battle of Manzikert. The result was a resounding victory for the Seljuks who then proceeded to take over most of the Byzantine heartland in Asia Minor. Their military, political, and religious victory was so complete there that we still call that land Turkey, even though it is a long way from the Turks' original homeland in Central Asia. The Byzantine emperor, Alexius I, called for mercenaries from Western Europe to help him reclaim Asia Minor from the Turks. Instead, he got the First Crusade, which took much of Syria, and Palestine for the Christian faith.

At the same time, the Seljuks were expanding against the Shiite Fatimids, which brought them up against a fanatical Shiite sect known as the Assassins. This group was centered in a mountain fortress and led by Hassan-ibn-al-Sabah, also known as the Old Man of the Mountain. Determined to stop the advance of the Sunnite Seljuks, he launched a campaign of political terror and murder that has become legendary. Hassan's followers operated under the influence of the drug, hashish, from which we get the word *assassin*. They showed remarkable determination and ability to infiltrate the most tightly guarded palaces and reach their intended victims with their poison daggers. Among those victims was the Seljuk sultan, Malik Shah, in 1092. His death combined with the First Crusade and the Seljuk custom of dividing their realm between all their sons (much as the Franks had done), created enough turmoil in the Seljuk realm to allow the Crusaders to take Palestine. Despite these setbacks, the Seljuks did manage to restore their power in Asia Minor. Their state, the Sultanate of Rum (Rome), thrived throughout the 1100's. However, much like the Franks with the Vikings, The Seljuks had their own nemesis: the Mongols.

In the early 1200's, a leader known to us as Genghis Khan united the various Mongol tribes in Central Asia into the most fearsome war machine known to history up to that point. Striking at incredible speed (up to 100 miles a day), they burned a path of destruction from China to Europe and the Muslim world unsurpassed until the wars of the twentieth century. Cities daring to resist them were methodically destroyed and their populations put to the sword. The defiance of the Assassins brought the wrath of the Mongols upon the Muslim world. In 1245, the Mongols annihilated the Seljuk army at Kose Dagh. In 1258, they sacked Baghdad and killed the last in the line of Abbasid caliphs. The Egyptian sultan Baibars finally halted the Mongols' relentless advance in 1260. The Mongols eventually settled down and even adopted Islam in the Muslim areas where they ruled. However their rampage had far reaching effects on the Turks and the Islamic world.

## Rise of the Ottoman Turks

On the frontier between the Turks and the Byzantines were various warlike groups, know as *ghazis* (holy warriors) for their efforts against the Christians. While the Sultanate of Rum was intact, these bands were largely held in check, since their wild ways were often as disruptive to the Seljuks as to the Byzantines. With the shattering

defeat at Kose Dagh, however, these ghazi bands were freed to raid at will. Among them was a leader of particular renown, Osman, who gave his name to the greatest of the Turkish states, the Ottomans.

Osman's leadership in battle attracted many Turkish warriors to his standard and made him the most successful of the ghazi states attacking the Byzantines and neighboring Muslims. His successes brought conquests and plunder which attracted more ghazis to his standard. This would trigger more campaigns against the Ottomans' enemies, which would bring more conquests and so on.

There were various reasons for the Ottomans' success. First of all, their army was the best in Europe and the Middle East. In addition to swarms of tough Turkish cavalry, the sultans also had the age's best artillery and its most dreaded regiment: the *Janissaries*. These were originally young boys taken from the homes of the sultan's Christian subjects and raised in his service as devout Muslims. Technically, the Janissaries were the sultan's slaves, but slaves with very high status. Trained to a peak of high efficiency, they ruled the battlefields from Persia to Eastern Europe.

Ottoman government was also well organized. Much of the bureaucracy was a class called *ghulams*, also originally Christian boys taken from their homes by the sultan's men. Like their counterparts in the army, the Janissaries, they were also known for their loyalty and efficiency. At the top of the government was the sultan, who had received "on the job" training as a boy, ruling provinces with the aid of experienced ministers. Upon the death of a sultan, his sons would typically fight for the throne. Such struggles were usually to the death, but, along with the training of the sultan's sons, did tend to produce the toughest and ablest rulers.

The Ottoman sultans also emphasized their religious position to claim leadership of Islam. For one thing, they were ghazis fighting for the faith. Later, they also controlled the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as the last shadowy claimants to the Abbasid caliphate.

However, for a number of years, the Ottomans were seen as just one of a number of ghazis. Then, in 1345, they took the opportunity to intervene in a Byzantine civil war in Europe. And once they had crossed into Europe, they were there to stay.

By 1400, the Ottomans had subdued the other ghazis in Asia Minor and were poised to take that long sought prize of the faithful, Constantinople. Then disaster struck when the last major eruption of nomadic tribes from Central Asia burst upon the scene. Their leader was Timur the Lame, whose path of conquest and destruction ranged from India to Russia. In 1402, he destroyed the Ottoman army, captured the sultan, Bayezid, and dragged him around in a cage for the rest of his days as a monument to his triumphs.

Timur's intentions were to loot and plunder, not to build a lasting state. As a result, his empire disintegrated upon his death, and the Ottomans were able to reassert their control in Asia Minor and Europe. By 1453, they were at the walls of Constantinople, finally ready to claim that prize.

The siege of Constantinople was the last heroic stand of the Byzantine Empire in one of the most desperate and hard fought struggles in history. It saw the destructive power of the newly emerging gunpowder technology being used alongside old style siege towers, galleys, and crossbows. In the end, the defenders were overwhelmed, and the Byzantine (and Roman) Empire passed into history.

For Europe, the fall of Constantinople meant that the old trade routes to the Far East were shut off by the Turks and new ones had to be found. This helped spur Portuguese exploration around Africa and Columbus' famous voyage to America. The fall of Constantinople also caused a number of Greek scholars to flee to Italy where they helped to stimulate the Italian Renaissance, one of the great cultural periods in history. In that way the Byzantines still lived on. For Islam, the victory meant that the Ottoman Turks had arrived as a major power. For the next century and a half, their very name would terrorize the Christian world.

The century from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the death of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1566 saw the Ottoman juggernaut roll to an almost unbroken series of conquests against both Christians and neighboring Muslim states. Mohammed II (1451-1481), the conqueror of Constantinople, continued his path of conquest, bringing the Balkan Peninsula south of the Danube River under his control.

The sultan Selim I (1512-1520), known to history as "the Grim", concentrated on his Muslim neighbors. To the east was a revived Persia under the Shiite dynasty of the Safavids. In 1514, Turks and Persians met on the field of Chaldiran. Turkish superiority in artillery and firearms proved decisive as the Persian cavalry were swept away by the Ottomans' massed gunfire. However, the Persians, learning from this, changed their strategy, laying waste the land before the Ottoman advance so the invaders would have nothing to sustain them. This proved effective, and a stable, if uneasy, frontier emerged between the Persian and Turkish realms.

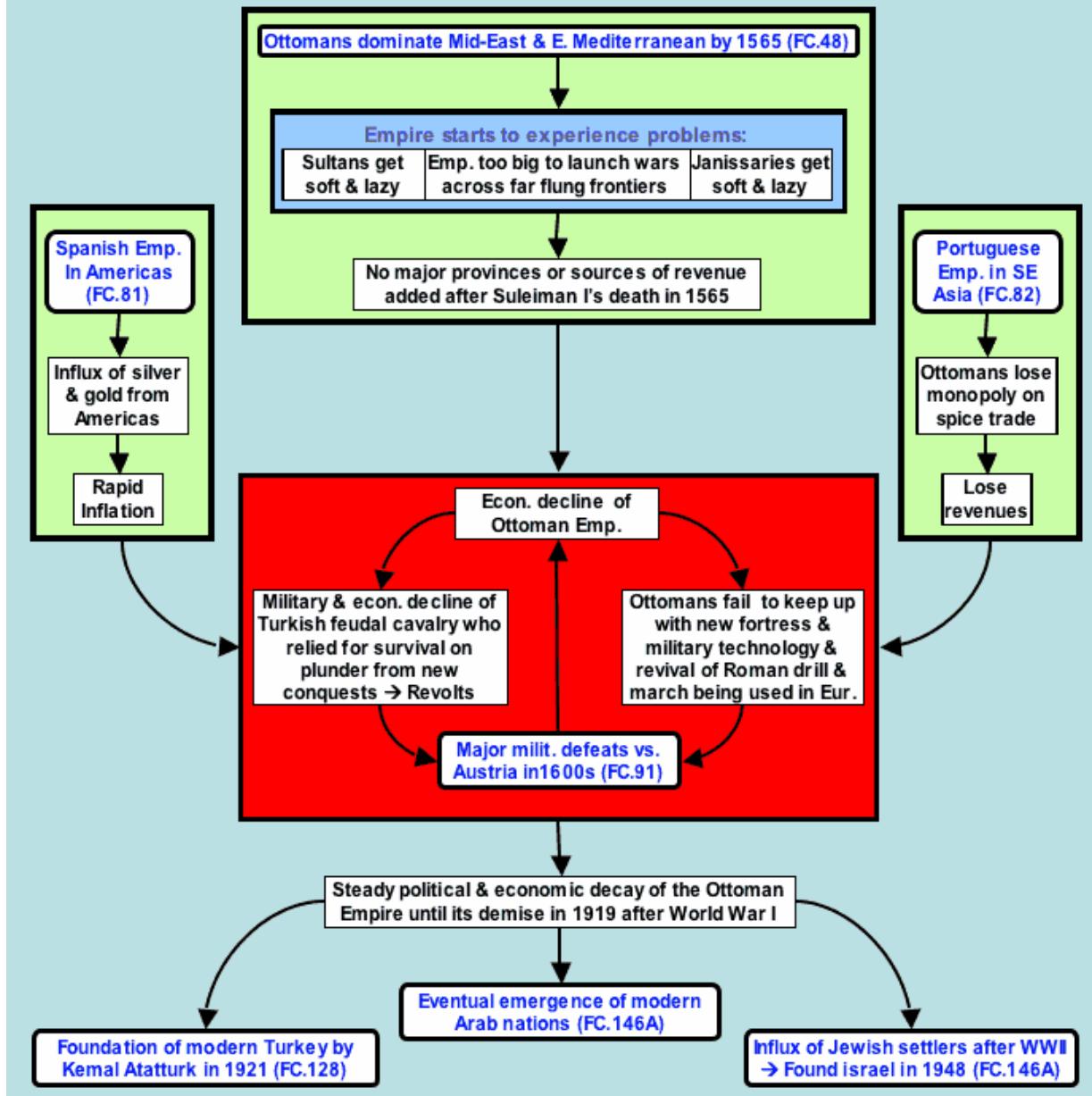
Selim was more successful against the Mameluke dynasty centered in Egypt. At the battle of Dabik (1516), the Ottomans once again used their firepower with terrible effect and, this time, with more lasting results. The unpopular Mameluke rule quickly collapsed and Ottoman rule extended into Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia, thus giving the sultan control of Islam's holiest places.

The reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66) was the high point of Ottoman expansion. His energies were directed mainly in the holy war against the Christians, driving northwest into Europe and due west across the Mediterranean. In 1526, at the battle of Mohacs, Turkish firepower proved its superiority once again, this time against the Hungarians, who left their king and most of their nobility dead on the field. The road to Vienna lay open, and it was here that the Ottoman advance into Europe ground to a halt. The siege of Vienna was the Turks' first major defeat. In its wake, a new frontier emerged between Christian and Muslim worlds, guarded by a complex and expensive series of fortresses on each side.

The Ottoman drive across the Mediterranean also was eventually stopped in two desperate clashes between Turks and Christians. The first was a titanic siege of the Knights of St. John on the strategic island of Malta in 1566. After four months of bitter fighting, a Christian relief force drove the battered Turkish army away. An equally desperate battle was fought at sea at Lepanto in 1571. The fact that there was no place for soldiers to retreat in a sea battle made the hand to hand fighting especially ferocious. After this, the Ottomans' fleet was severely crippled, their tide of victories and conquests pretty much ceased, and their empire entered a long period of steady decline.

## **FC49The decline of the Ottoman Empire (1565-1918)**

## FC.49 THE DECLINE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (c.1565-1918)



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In the late 1500's, the Ottoman Empire started going into decline as a result of both internal and external factors. Internally, the Ottomans suffered from three major problems. First of all, after Suleiman's death, the sultans were less capable and energetic, being raised and spending their time increasingly at court with all its harem intrigues. Without the sultan's strong hand at the helm, corruption became a major problem. Second, the Janissaries became a virtual hereditary caste, demanding increasingly more pay while they also grew soft and lazy. Finally, the size of the empire created problems. The sultan was expected to lead the army, setting out with it each spring from the capital. This meant that as the frontiers expanded, it took the army longer to reach the enemy, thus shortening the campaign season to the point where it was very hard to conquer new lands. This especially hurt the Turks at the siege of Vienna in 1529. They did not reach the city until September, and winter set in early with disastrous results for the troops not used to European winters. Because of these factors, the Turks made few new conquests after 1565 and, as a result, gained no significant new revenues and plunder.

Two external economic factors also hurt the Ottomans, both of them stemming from the Age of Exploration then taking place. For one thing, the Portuguese circumnavigation around Africa to India had opened a new spice route to Asia. Therefore, the Turks lost their monopoly on the spice trade going to Europe, which cost them a good deal of much needed money. The other problem came from the Spanish Empire in the Americas that was bringing a huge influx of gold and silver to Europe. This triggered rampant inflation during the 1500's, which worked its way eastward into the Ottoman Empire. This inflation, combined with the other factors hurting the empire's revenues, led to serious economic decline.

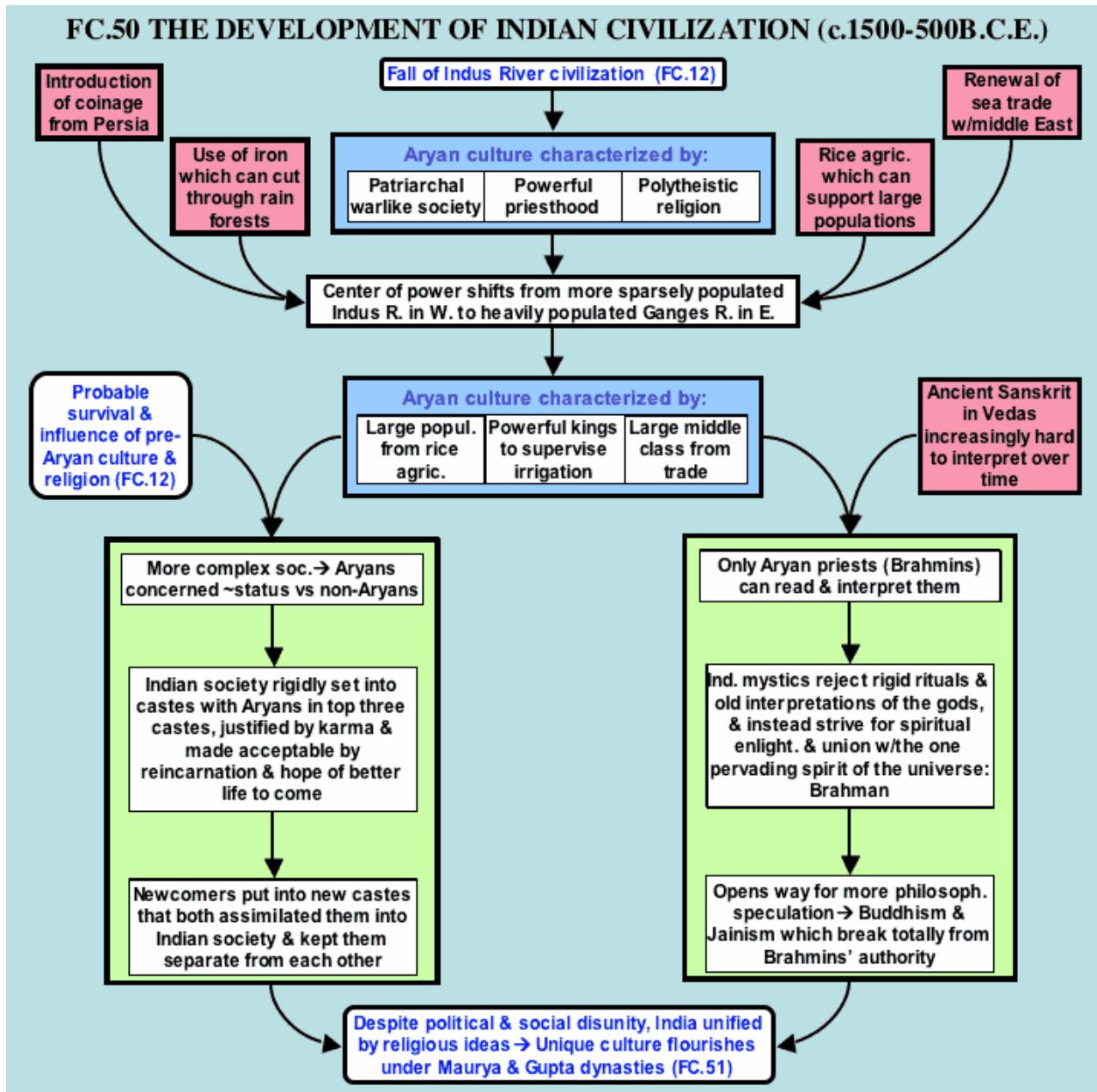
That economic decline hurt the empire militarily in two ways that fed back into further economic decline. First of all, after 1600, the Turks lost their technological and military edge. While European armies were constantly upgrading their artillery and firearms, the Ottomans let theirs stagnate, thus putting them at a disadvantage against their enemies. Also, as Turkish conquests ground to a halt, a stable frontier guarded by expensive fortresses evolved, which drained the empire of even more money. At the same time, Europeans were reviving the Roman concept of strict drill and discipline to create much more efficient and reliable armies. However, the Turks failed to adapt these techniques and, as a result, found themselves increasingly at a disadvantage when fighting against European armies.

Second, the tough feudal Turkish cavalry that had been the backbone of the army in the mobile wars of conquest were less useful to the sultans who now needed professional garrisons to run the frontier forts. Without wars of conquest to occupy and enrich them, they became restless and troublesome to the central government. That combined with the problems from the Janissaries, caused revolts that further disrupted the empire. (Eventually, the Janissaries would become so troublesome that one sultan would have to surround and massacre them.) Both of these military problems, the failure to keep up with the West and the increasingly rebellious army, fed back into the empire's economic decline, which further aggravated its military problems.

The following centuries saw the Ottoman Empire suffer from steady political and economic decay. By the 1800's, its decrepit condition would earn it the uncomplimentary title of "The Sick Man of Europe". Finally, the shock of World War I would destroy the Ottoman Empire once and for all, breaking it into what have become such Middle Eastern nations as Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel.

## **Indian History & Civilization Unit 7: Indian History and Civilization**

### **FC50 The development of Indian civilization (1500-500 BCE)**



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“There was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred?...There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day...Darkness was hidden by darkness...Whence was [the universe] produced? Whence is this creation?...The one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows---or perhaps he does not know.”— *Vedic hymn*

## Aryan society and the Vedic Age (c.1500-1000 B.C.E.)

It is hard to imagine that the same warrior society that took over the Indus River civilization could also compose such philosophical speculations as those quoted above. However, it was these Aryans who would create the core and essence of Indian civilization while they themselves were being transformed by elements of the older Indus River culture they had replaced. Several things distinguished early Aryan society, as seen in the series of four sacred texts, the *Vedas*, our main source of information on this period. For one thing, they were a warlike society of nomadic herders closely associated with the Persians until the two peoples parted ways around 2000 B.C.E. They were organized into tribes ruled by a king and a priest. The Aryans measured their wealth in cattle, which

was a standard unit of trade in the absence of coinage and the primary cause of wars and raids. Even today, the cow is still highly revered in Indian society. Aryan society was strongly patriarchal, giving women an inferior status. However, women probably had a say in who they married, could attend public ceremonies, and could remarry when widowed. Some women even attended the priestly schools, composed hymns, and were considered sages.

Another important aspect of Aryan society was its religion. The Aryans worshipped thirty-three gods in human form who were divided into three groups corresponding to the heavens, the sky, and earth. The most frequently summoned god was Indra, a god of war carrying a lightning bolt who ate, drank and lived with gusto. This reflected a similar joy of living in Aryan society that enjoyed music, dancing, gambling, drinking, and chariot racing. Possibly the most distinguishing feature of Aryan society was its powerful priesthood, the Brahmins. Although the Aryans had no temples or images of their gods, just open air sacrificial altars, their priests were the only ones who could perform the highly ritualized and elaborate sacrifices that their religion demanded.

## The Later Vedic Age (c.1000-500 B.C.E.)

Around 1000 B.C.E. the Aryans started expanding into the Ganges River valley to the east. Several factors aided them in this. One of these was the use of iron that could cut through the Ganges Valley's thick rain forests and clear the way for settlement. A second factor was the cultivation of rice that has the highest calorie content of any grain, thus supporting large populations. These combined with the renewal of sea borne trade with Mesopotamia in the 700's and the introduction of coinage by the Persians two centuries later led to the creation of powerful kingdoms in the Ganges Valley characterized by three features. First they were heavily populated, thanks to the rice agriculture. Secondly, they were highly centralized under the rule of powerful kings who were needed to supervise the irrigation systems vital to the cultivation of rice. And third, there was a thriving urban culture with a large middle class involved in trade.

These new cities and kingdoms caused the center of power to shift from the more sparsely populated Indus River Valley in the West to the heavily populated kingdoms and cities of the Ganges. However, in addition to this shift in the center of power, the structure of Aryan society was being radically changed. Kings assumed more power for directing the irrigation projects and their wars against neighboring non-Aryans. Also as many Aryans settled from herding cattle into rice agriculture or moved into the growing cities, they had more daily contact with the non-Aryan population. The more complex society that was evolving led to mounting concerns among ordinary Aryans about losing their superior status over the non-Aryans.

Meanwhile, as time passed, the *Vedas*, which had been composed in an archaic form of Sanskrit, became increasingly vague in their meaning to the majority of people. This left the Brahmins as the only ones who could read and interpret them and properly perform the elaborate rituals needed to influence the gods. And that gave the Brahmins an even higher status in society. These changes in society, along with the probable resurgence of many pre-Aryan beliefs, triggered two of the most important developments in Indian history: the caste system and India's unique religious and philosophical ideas.

## Caste

Before their entry into India, Aryan society was divided into three loosely defined classes: nobles (who chose king), Brahmins (priests), and the ordinary tribesmen who tended cattle. At that time, there were no restrictions on diet, intermarriage, or occupations. When they took over the Indus River Valley, the original inhabitants, whom the Aryans had complete contempt for, were lumped together into one class. At first, this simple arrangement had worked for the Aryans until the changes mentioned above made them more defensive about their traditional place in Indian society. The result was a rigid stratification of Indian society known as the caste system. Simply put, a caste is a social group often sharing the same occupation and among whose members intermarriage and dining can exclusively take place.

Justification for the caste system came from commentaries on the *Vedas* known as the *Brahmanas* which defined four divinely ordained castes corresponding to various parts of the body: the *Brahmins* (mouths), *Kshatriyas*

(warriors and rulers) who were the arms, *Vaisyas* (productive members) who were the thighs, and the *Sudras* (feet) who performed the humblest tasks, especially those carrying some sort of religious stigma. The first three castes were composed of Aryans, while the non-Aryan Sudras were, according to the *Brahmanas*, "fit to be beaten" and could be "slain at will".

Caste defined the boundaries of an Indian's social world, outside of which he could do little. As Indian society became more complex, literally thousands of castes evolved. Newcomers, such as the British, would be excluded from other castes and thus became castes of their own. The caste system fragmented Indian society in such a way as to make political unification very difficult. As a result, the state has had less power and influence over India's history than its counterparts in other societies. Instead, the more unifying forces in Indian history have come from its religious and philosophical ideas.

## The evolution of India's religious ideas

As we have seen, the archaic Sanskrit used in the *Vedas* made the Brahmins the only ones who could interpret them and perform the intricate sacrifices they required. As a result, they claimed and assumed a higher place than ever in society. In fact, their commentaries on the *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, played down the power of the Vedic gods and exalted their own since their sacrifices could manipulate the powers of the universe. This exalted status plus the growing vagueness of the *Vedas* caused many Brahmins to engage in some wild speculations on the meanings of these texts and the rites they performed.

Not everyone blindly accepted the Brahmins' claims and the value of the rigid rituals they performed. Instead, a number Indians went to the forest to live as ascetics who, much like the early Christian hermits centuries later, performed various feats such as walking on nails or sitting close to fires in the hot sun to mortify the flesh and thus gain enlightenment. Many of these hermits were nobles whose status had been cut down by the rising power of kings. Whereas in most cultures such nobles would stage a rebellion, in India it was common for such men to seek higher knowledge as hermits. Taking a cue from the Brahmins themselves, these hermits also engaged in philosophical speculations. From these speculations came another series of treatises, the *Upanishads*. Although these works were unsystematic and varied greatly in their conclusions, they all shared a common belief in a more mystical and personal religious experience.

The *Upanishads* introduced several key concepts of Indian philosophy. One was a vague universal and spiritual entity known as *Brahman*. Although the various gods still existed, they were mere manifestations of *Brahman*. This would be a key unifying factor in Hinduism that worshipped thousands of gods, all of which were seen as aspects of the one spirit, *Brahman*. Another important idea was *reincarnation*, the belief that we are reborn over and over again in forms that reflect our *karma*, the sum total of our good and bad deeds. The better our karma, the higher the form of life we are reborn as. Finally, there is *dharma*, the duty that we are obligated to carry out in our present station in life. If we carry out our *dharma*, our karma is improved so we can be reborn in a higher form. Ironically, this belief in karma and *dharma* both justified the rigid caste system of India and offered people the hope of rising up from their present station in life to a better one in the next.

Our ultimate goal, according to the *Upanishads*, is not the old Aryan goal of prosperity and good health in this life. Rather it is to shed our karma and ego to become one with *Brahman* like a river flowing into and merging with the sea. Since these somewhat obscure and esoteric ideas mainly appealed to intellectuals, the Brahmins were willing to accept them as long as people also paid them honor. As fragmented as India might be politically and socially, these ideas of *Brahman*, reincarnation, karma, and *dharma* would provide a unifying thread between India's main religions, in particular Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

## Jainism and Buddhism

The radical departure that the *Upanishads* took from the traditional Brahminic religion opened the way for new beliefs that totally rejected the authority of the Brahmins. Two of these were Jainism and Buddhism. Jainism was founded around 500 B.C.E. by a prince Vardhamana known also as Mahavira ("great hero") and Jina ("conqueror"), which gave Jainism its name. After twelve years of severe austerity and meditation as a hermit, he

attained enlightenment and spent the rest of his life sharing his insights with others. Mahavira accepted the Upanishads' principles of Brahman, karma, and reincarnation.

However, rather than seeing karma as an abstract principle, he viewed it as a material substance that clings to us and weighs us down. Thus our goal is to cleanse our souls of karma so we can cease to be reborn. Since nearly every act produces impurities, the ideal life is to retire to a monastery and do nothing. Even rocks and streams were seen to have souls that it is terrible to kill, causing some Jain monks to sweep paths before them and wear masks to avoid inadvertently killing the tiniest life forms. Since even plowing the land can turn over the soil and kill worms, agriculture was frowned upon, causing many Jains to become merchants. The ideal death was seen to be starving oneself, which Mahavira himself did at the age of 72. Jainism was fairly popular since it made karma more concrete and understandable while offering hope for a better existence to its followers.

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama who, like Mahavira, at first led the sheltered and privileged life of a prince. A prophecy supposedly foretold that Siddhartha would either unify all India or spiritually redeem the world. His father, wanting him to be a great king, tried to shelter him from seeing any of the troubles of the world. However, this strategy backfired, because when Siddhartha finally did come across humans suffering, he was so shocked that he ran off to live the life of an ascetic. After six years of this severe lifestyle, he left the forest and found enlightenment while sitting under a fig tree. From this he became known as the Buddha (Enlightened one). The basic ideas of Buddhism are found in its four noble truths.

- 1. Life is sorrow.**
- 2. Sorrow arises from craving (especially for individual fulfillment).**
- 3. The stopping of sorrow is the complete stopping of craving.**
- 4. A noble eightfold path exists to stop sorrow and which we should follow in order:**
5. Right belief or knowledge—renouncing worldly things & dedication to humanitarianism;
6. Right resolve—one should aspire to the achievement of Nirvana;
7. Right speech—lets one serve as a model for others to follow;
8. Right conduct—acknowledges life's sanctity through chastity, sobriety, & non-violence;
9. Right livelihood—life of service, not selfishness, preferably monk;
10. Right effort—helps one keep his inner self-free of evil thoughts;
11. Right mindfulness—constant awareness that craving is pointless; and
12. Right meditation—lets one be selfless in thought & acts.

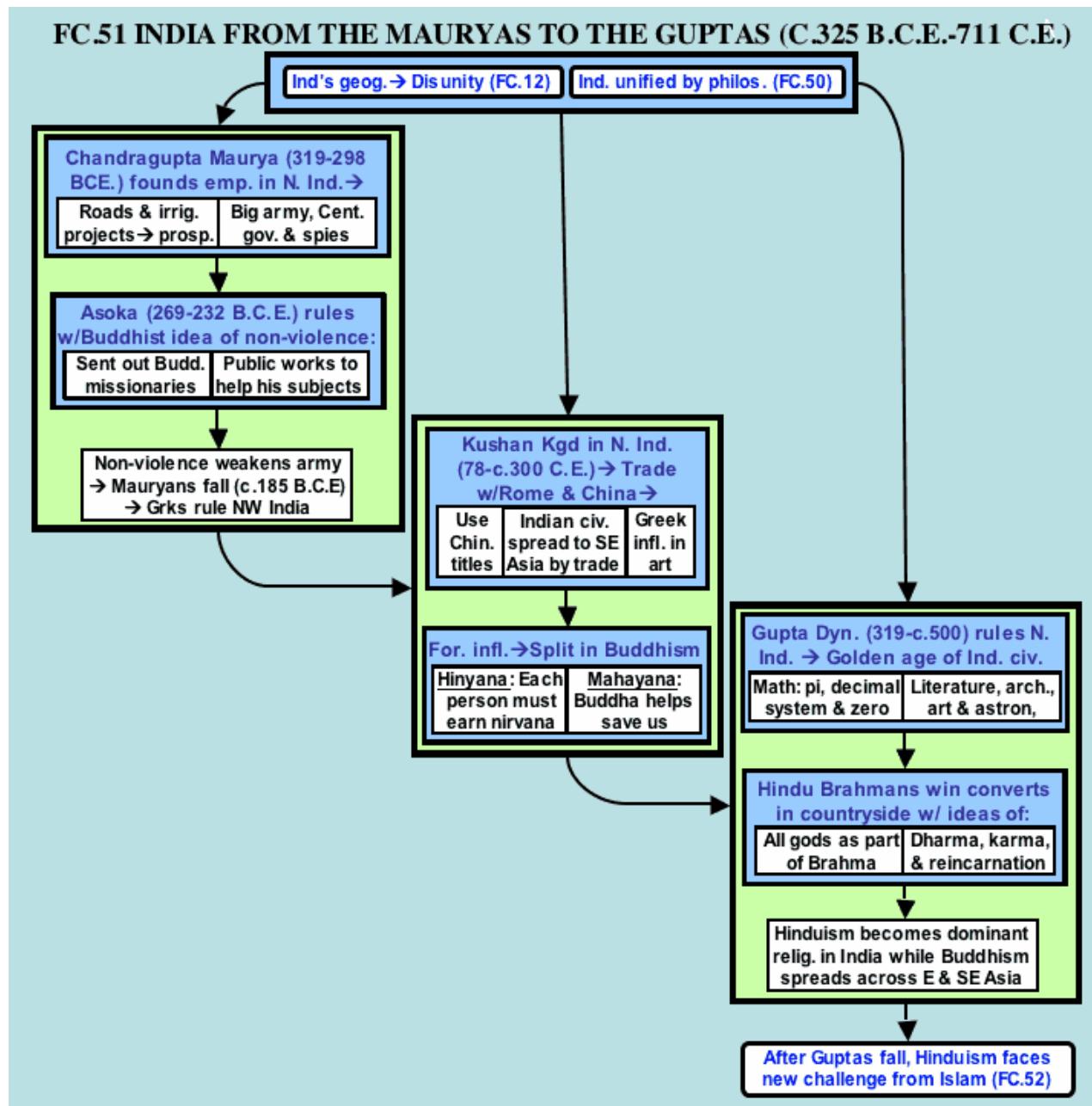
Eventually, following this noble eightfold path should break the chain of reincarnations, and lead to the attainment of Nirvana, a state of bliss where one's ego will melt away and merge with Brahma like a drop of water is lost in the ocean. In its purest form, known as Hinyana ("smaller vehicle"), Buddhism technically is not a religion with rites for such things as birth and death or a developed theology. Instead, one must rely on his or her own efforts to attain Nirvana. However, later versions known as Mahayana ("Greater vehicle") more closely resembled more traditional religions with various rites and reliance on Buddha for salvation.

Buddhism bore some striking similarities to Christianity. Both were egalitarian, treating women and children as equally important as men. Both had a savior god bridging the gap between humans and god. The main goal in each religion was salvation of the soul, not earthly wealth or power. Each of them demanded ethical behavior and had networks of monasteries to spread their respective messages. Both also made room for the invocation of lesser beings. In the case of Christianity, those beings were saints and angels. In Buddhism they were the *bodhisattvas*, people who were on the verge of attaining Nirvana, but chose to stay behind to help others in their spiritual efforts.

One major difference between the two was that Christianity was an historical religion with certain defining events, such as the Exodus, Christ's life, etc. In contrast, Buddhism was cyclical in nature, believing that the universe goes through an endless number of cycles of creation and destruction.

Although Buddhism would spread its influence across south and East Asia, it would nearly die out in its homeland of India. This was because the Brahmins would adopt many of Buddhism's ideas and fuse them with their own practices and the pre-Aryan polytheistic beliefs of the people. The result would be that unique synthesis known as Hinduism, a religion that would unify India by taking its many cults and gods and interpret them all as manifestations of the same religion.

## FC51 India from the Maurya to the Gupta dynasties (500 BCE-711 CE)



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## The Mauryan Empire (c.325-200 B.C.E.)

As we have seen, various factors such as climate, topography, and disease made India very difficult to unify. By the same token, we have also seen how India's religious and philosophical ideas were flexible enough to act as a unifying influence. After 400 BC, the combination of these opposing influences has allowed a succession of states to unify India briefly, only to come apart again.

The first empire of note was that of the Mauryan Dynasty. Its founder, Chandragupta Maurya (325-299 B.C.E.), was the ruler of Maghada, then the largest state in northeastern India. By 315 B.C.E. he had expanded into the Punjab and Indus River valley where he clashed with the Macedonian general, Seleucus. Being preoccupied with the struggles for power following Alexander the Great's death, Seleucus surrendered his Indian lands to Chandragupta in return for 500 war elephants. (Those elephants would play a crucial role in the battle of Ipsus and the subsequent emergence of the Hellenistic Kingdoms).

Chandragupta and his son, Bindusara, extended Mauryan rule over northern India and the Deccan to the south. Their rule was strict, reputedly having an army of some 700,000 men and 9,000 elephants. In the words of the *Arthashastra*, the political manual written for Chandragupta, "Government is the science of punishment." On the other hand, also following the *Arthashastra's* advice that a king's good is what is good for his subjects, Chandragupta and Bindusara built and maintained roads, bridges, and irrigation systems.

Bindusara's successor and one of the most remarkable rulers in history was Ashoka (269-232 B.C.E.). A bloody struggle for the throne and the even bloodier conquest of Kalinga in 261 B.C.E upset him so much that he embraced the Buddhist concept of non-violence and renounced war, gave up the hunt, and outlawed the killing of any animals not used or eaten. Throughout his reign, Ashoka continued to rule in the spirit of Buddhism (which he may also have seen as a unifying force for his empire). He sent out officers of righteousness to ensure the just rule by his officials. He codified Buddhist laws and principles. And he worked for the welfare of his subjects by digging wells, building rest houses and planting banyan trees for shade, medicinal herbs, and mango trees. Unfortunately, Ashoka's policy of non-violence also undermined his army's efficiency, which allowed revolts, invasions, and the fall of the Mauryan Empire by 185 B.C.E.

The fall of the Mauryan Empire allowed the expansion of the Greek kingdom of Bactria (modern Afghanistan) into northwestern India around 150 B.C.E. The Greeks probably influenced Indian culture in a number of fields: medicine, astrology, drama, and sculpture. There is even a philosophical work, *The Menander*, where the Greco-Bactrian king, Menander has a dialogue with a Buddhist monk.

## The Kushans (78-c.300 C.E.)

From about 50 B.C.E to 78 C.E. a succession of Asiatic tribes pushed into northwestern India. One of these tribes, the Kushans, united the others behind them and established a kingdom that encompassed northern India from the Indus to the Ganges valleys and possibly to the Himalayas and the Silk Road. This period also saw the rising influence of a middle class of merchants and craftsmen who took full advantage of their central position for trade. Therefore, the Kushan capital of Purashapura in the rich province of Gandhara became the hub of a lively trade between Rome, India, and China. Indian merchants especially profited from their middleman role of getting spices from South-east Asia and silk from China for Roman traders. The large number of Roman coins circulating in India at this time indicates how extensive and profitable this trade was for India and likewise how costly it was for Rome, being one of the causes for its decline and fall.

India exported and imported more than material goods at this time. Buddhism was especially popular with Indian merchants, since it was one occupation that could stay clear of killing people, animals, and even small creatures in the soil. As a result, merchants spread Buddhism to Southeast and Central Asia and as far away as China. Indian culture was so influential in the emergence of civilization and kingdoms in Southeast Asia that this region along with India has been referred to as Greater India. Buddhist ideas may have even influenced such religious groups in the Roman Empire as the Manicheans, Gnostics, and Neo-Platonists.

By the same token, foreign ideas also influenced India. Greek influence was seen in the Gandharan style of sculpture, which portrayed Buddha with curly hair and made its way as Far East as China. Also the Kushan rulers adopted the Chinese title "Son of Heaven." Even more striking was the influence Christianity might have had on Buddhism, in particular the idea of Maitreya Buddha, the suffering savior who would redeem us through his own pain.

## Mahayana and Hinyana Buddhism

Although Buddha himself had resisted any attempts to deify him, such attempts started soon after his death. By the first century *C.E.*, this had created a split in Buddhism. The old belief of each of us being responsible for our own salvation was known as *Hinyana* Buddhism ("the Lesser Vehicle") since we each must strive for salvation on our own. The newer belief was called *Mahayana* ("the Greater Vehicle") since Buddha saves all of us together. One spin-off of this idea was that of the *Bodhisattvas*, people who have earned Nirvana but have chosen to stay behind in this world to help other people attain Nirvana. Over time, various branches of Mahayana would emerge, some having innumerable Bodhisattvas inhabiting complex hierarchies of heavens as stages leading to Nirvana. *Hinyana* Buddhism would be the dominant form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Southeast Asia. Mahayana would prevail in India, Central Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan.

## The Guptas (c.300-500)

The Kushan realm remained a center of culture until its demise in the late third century at the hands of a new power rising in the West, the Sassanid Persians. However, a new native dynasty, the Guptas, emerged in the fourth century to take the Kushans' place. Its founder, Chandra Gupta I (319-335), although from an obscure family in Bihar in the northeast, made a favorable marriage that helped him control the Ganges River Valley by his death. His successors eventually brought Northern India under their rule while states in the Deccan and Sri Lanka agreed to become the Guptas' vassals.

The Gupta period is seen as a golden age of Indian culture. Indian astronomers came up with the idea of a round earth rotating on its axis. Indian mathematicians developed such concepts as Pi, negative numbers, a decimal system with place value digits, zero, and quadratic equations. Unfortunately, these ideas remained the preserve of a select group of individuals. Not until the Arabs came into India and adapted these concepts for their own uses were they made generally available. This is reflected by our still referring to them as Arabic numerals. In literature, India's two greatest epic poems, the *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata*, which itself contains possibly the most revered work in Indian literature, the *Bhagavad Gita*, were written down in their final forms. India's greatest playwright, Kalidasa, flourished at this time. Unlike Greek drama, the point of Indian drama is to delight the audience and leave it with a serene and peaceful feeling. Both Buddhist and the emerging Hindu art and architecture also thrived. Once again, Greek influence can still be seen in the simplicity and serenity of Buddhist art. Hindu temples were modeled after caves, which Indians always considered sacred and were decorated with sculptures.

During this time, a major shift took place in the religious climate of India. The Guptas, like many rulers before them, had been active supporters of Buddhism. This, and their popularity among the rich middle classes, led to large contributions to Buddhist monasteries, which became quite wealthy, much like their counterparts in Christian Europe. Besides theological disputes and the corruption such wealth and influence at court might bring, Buddhists tended to move their monasteries away from populated areas. Meanwhile, the Brahmins were renewing contact with the people and winning many converts to their religion, which at this point had evolved into what we now call Hinduism. In the following centuries, Hinduism would replace Buddhism as the major religion in India, although it continued to spread across Asia.

## Hinduism

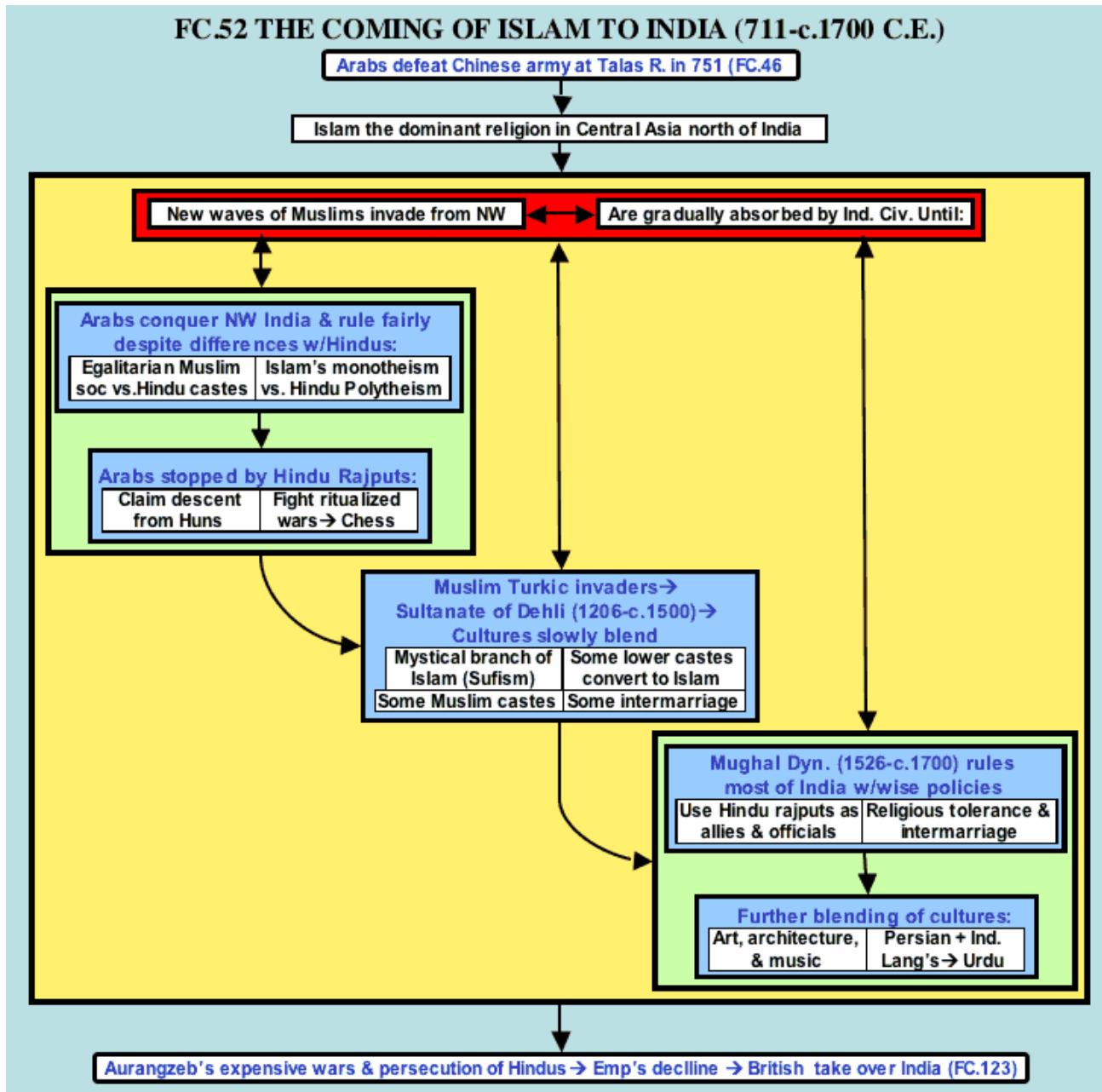
Of the world's great religions, Hinduism is especially unique, since it has no historical founder who had some revelation at some point in time. It has no fixed set of worship, with some people praying, others making

sacrifices, and still others meditating. Although it is polytheistic, recognizing millions of gods, it is somewhat monotheistic in that it sees these various gods as manifestations of the one unifying god, Brahma. It is this flexibility that has made it so popular and such a unifying force in India.

While there are millions of gods, there are three that most people worship one or the other of: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Brahma is seen as the supreme being of creation who put into motion a constantly repeating cycle of destruction and rebirth. Although seen as the supreme god, who all others are reconciled to, Brahma has not been as popular as Vishnu and Shiva. Vishnu is the kind and merciful preserver of Brahma's creation who has appeared in various manifestations, known as *avatars*, to help humanity. The most popular of his manifestations has been Krishna, who as a child was full of mischief and as an adult a great lover and a mighty warrior, qualities once associated with Indra. Shiva combined the attributes of various Harappan and Aryan gods, being at once a god of destruction and rebirth, mercy and wrath, and constancy and unpredictability.

Hinduism maintains the old Brahmanic and Buddhist principles of karma, dharma, and reincarnation. Unlike the old Brahmanic religion, it puts more emphasis on personal devotion to a god than on sacrifices performed by the Brahmins. This made Hinduism especially popular in India and it has dominated India ever since. However, the coming of Islam in the eighth century offered a new challenge to Hinduism's dominance.

## **FC52The coming of Islam to India (711-c.1800)**



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## Introduction

Until 711 C.E., India had faced many invaders, but no substantial challenges on both a military and cultural level. The Persians and Greeks had confronted India with highly developed civilizations, but also had reached the limits of their expansion by the time they arrived there. The various nomadic peoples who entered India between the second century B.C.E. and eighth century C.E. may have been more potent military threats, but their cultures were thoroughly absorbed by India. However, in 711 C.E., India faced for the first time a vital people with a culture and religion both as sophisticated and powerful as its own: Islam.

Much of the relationship between Islam and Hinduism hinged on a battle that took place at the Talas River in Central Asia in 751 C.E. between the expanding empires of the Arab Muslims and T'ang China. The Arab victory in that battle not only stopped the T'ang dynasty's expansion to the West; it also led to the triumph of Islam over Buddhism as the prevailing religion in Central Asia. As a result, although India continued to face a succession of

invaders from the North, all those invaders had Islam as the common defining element of their cultures, a religion that in its own way was as appealing as Hinduism.

## **Pattern of development**

For 1000 years following the entry of the Arab Muslims into India, a basic pattern of development emerged. Muslims would come into North-western India and expand to the south and east. Eventually, India's environment would slow them down, as Islamic and Indian civilizations would leave their marks on each other. Then another group of Muslims would come in and repeat the process. This pattern repeated itself in three successive waves: the Arabs in the eighth century, various Turkish peoples starting around 1000 C.E., and the Mughal dynasty that entered India in 1526. This cycle may have continued repeating itself except for the intrusion of the British who would present India with a new cultural challenge.

### **Arabs and Rajputs (711-c.1000 C.E.)**

The Arab Muslims entered India in 711, the same year their religious compatriots in the West entered Spain. They conquered the area known as Sind in the Indus River valley (modern Pakistan). It is hard to imagine two religions and civilizations so different in their outlooks as Islam and Hinduism. Whereas Islam saw all people as equal before God, India's rigid caste system presented a highly stratified social structure sanctioned by religion. On the other hand, while Hinduism was incredibly tolerant of a multitude of gods, Islam was strictly monotheistic. For better or worse, the two cultures have co-existed, though not always peacefully, since the Arabs arrived until the present day.

Arab expansion was stopped by various feudal Indian princes known as the Rajputs who themselves may have been descended from invading Huns two centuries earlier. While theoretically loyal to a king, they functioned as virtually independent rulers. As trade increased, so did competition for the control of that trade. As a result, the Rajputs often spent as much time fighting each other as they did resisting foreign invaders. Their warfare was highly ritualized and regulated by an elaborate code of behavior, much like the codes of chivalry and Bushido regulated the fighting of elite nobles in medieval Europe and Japan. Our modern game of chess, originating in India, reflects this ceremonial way of fighting wars. Unfortunately for the Rajputs, this also kept them from adapting to changes in warfare and hampering the Muslim advance across Northern India.

Arab rule was fairly tolerant of Hinduism. They even preserved the temple of a Hindu sun god in Multan, which also prevented Hindu attacks on the city that might damage this holy spot. Although the Arabs only conquered the northwestern part of India, their tolerant rule won many converts to Islam in that region which remains Muslim to this day. This provided a solid base for further Muslim expansion into India.

### **Turkish invaders and the Sultanate of Delhi (c.1000-1526)**

By 1000 C.E., the Abbasid Caliphate and Arabs' grip on their empire were in decline because of the empire's vast size, weak caliphs, and the split between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Like the caliphs in Baghdad, the Arabs in Afghanistan relied increasingly on slave bodyguards drawn chiefly from neighboring Turkish tribes. Eventually these Turkish warriors asserted their independence and took over from the Arabs. From this base in Afghanistan, they launched raids into India, thus resuming Muslim expansion in the subcontinent.

Compared to the Arabs, Turkish raids into India were much more ruthless and destructive. The first of these raiders, Mahmud of Ghazni, earned the title of "the Idol Smasher" for the damage he did to Hindu Temples, while the ruler, Ala al-Din, similarly came to be called "the World Burner." These raids and invasions especially hurt Buddhism, as kings in East India were no longer able or willing to patronize Buddhist monasteries. This led many Buddhists either to convert to Islam or flee to Tibet and Southeast Asia. As a result, Buddhism virtually died out as a religion in India although its influence elsewhere continued to spread.

The Mongol invasions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries seriously disrupted Muslim civilization, especially in Central Asia. As a result, Muslims left on their own in India built an independent kingdom, the Sultanate of Delhi

(1206-c.1500). Also, many Muslim scholars fleeing the Mongol onslaught came to India. This, along with an active sea-borne trade with Southeast Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East led to a flowering of Muslim culture in India. The Sultanate of Delhi witnessed a gradual blending of Muslim and Hindu cultures. Many Hindus learned Persian and Muslim bureaucratic procedures. Helping this process was the introduction of paper, which made record keeping easier, thus, enhancing the Sultan's control over his realm. Islam gained a number of converts from lower castes, especially from such castes as elephant trainers, weavers, and butchers who worked for the Muslims and saw this as a way to improve their station in life.

Muslims also absorbed Indian Culture, with caste distinctions starting to appear among them, Muslim men marrying Hindu women, and a mystical branch of Islam, Sufism, developing that used Hindu techniques such as meditation. Altogether, these developments paved the way for the next wave of invaders: the Mughals.

### **The Mughal Dynasty (1526-c.1700)**

was founded by Babur the Tiger, an Afghan leader claiming descent from both Genghis Khan and Timur the Lame. His original intention was the reconquest of Timur's Central Asian empire. However, when the Safavid Dynasty in Persia thwarted this plan, he turned toward India. Using a combination of firearms, artillery, and nomadic cavalry, he defeated the Sultan of Delhi's much larger army at Panipat in 1526 and beat an even larger army of Rajputs the next year. By his death in 1530, Babur had established the basis for over a century and a half of Mughal expansion that would encompass all but the southern tip of India.

The greatest of the Mughal rulers was Akbar the Great (1656-1605). Coming to the throne at the age of thirteen, he soon proved himself a firm and shrewd ruler who quickly crushed any revolts in his inherited lands and expanded Mughal power into the Deccan. However, it was Akbar's talents as a ruler, not a conqueror that earned him the title, "the Great." Instead of trying to rule the stubborn Rajputs by force, he allied with them, using them as his officers and government officials to keep his unruly Muslim nobles in line. He tolerated Hinduism, married Hindu princesses, and held scholarly discussions on any and all religions each Friday. He even founded his own religion, Din Ilahi, a simple monotheistic faith that would not survive its founder's death.

Akbar looked out for his peoples' welfare by holding a land survey to ensure fair taxes. He would even over-rule his own Muslim judges, the ulema, in order to secure justice and prosperity for his subjects. Akbar was also a patron of the arts, encouraging both Hindu and Muslim artists, poets, and musicians.

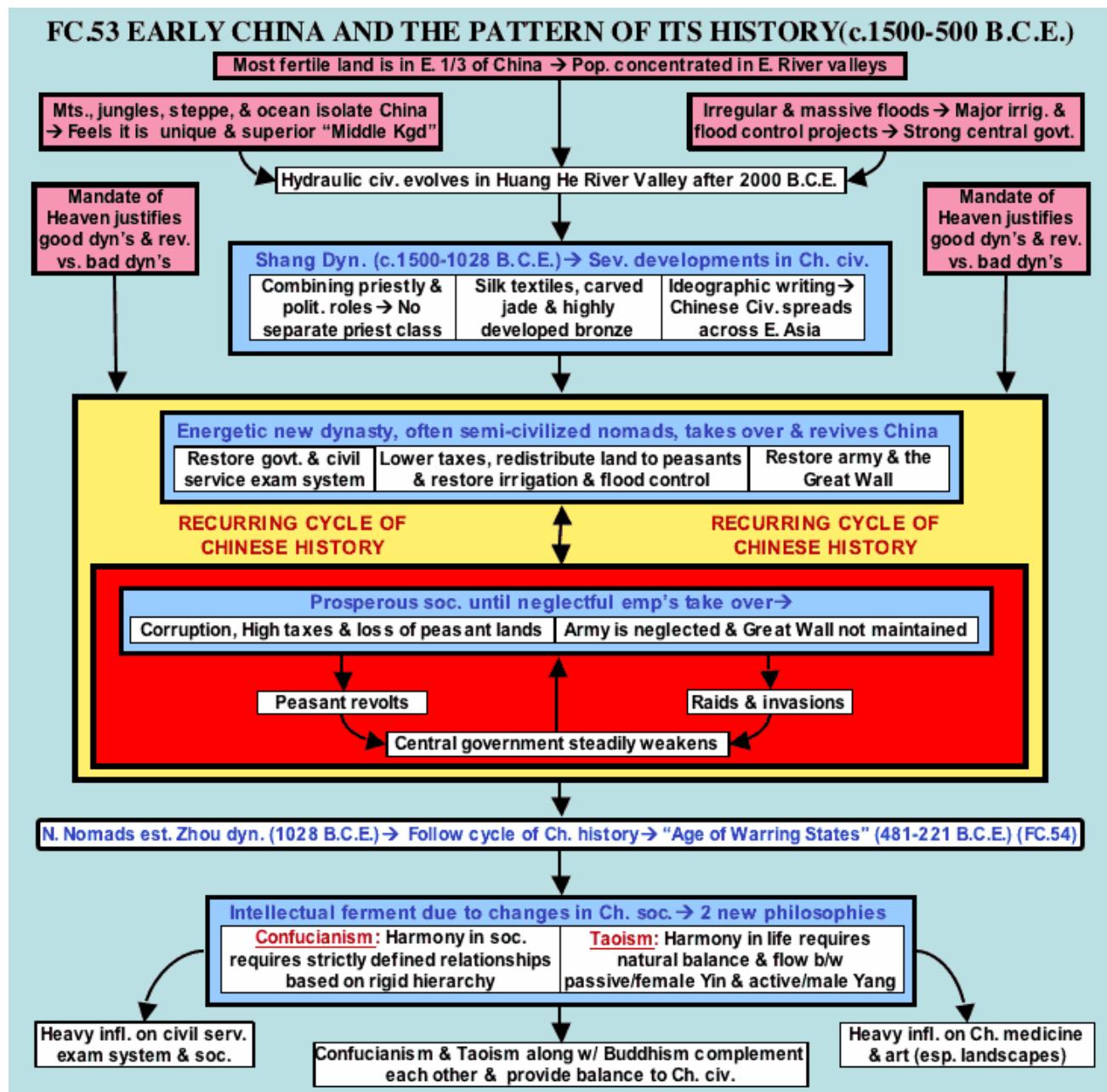
Akbar established a strong and stable state that allowed his three successors, Jahangir (1605-27), Shah Jahan (1628-58), and Aurangzeb (1658-1707), to keep expanding the Mughal realm. During this time, India experienced another flourishing of the arts with the fusion of Persian and Hindu styles. In painting, Mughal artists combined the Persian tradition of colorful painting with the looser and more natural style of Indian artists. Architecture especially reflected Muslim influence as seen in the Taj Mahal, a mausoleum for Shah Jahan's wife and still considered one of the world's most beautiful buildings. In music, the sultan, Aurangzeb's ban on music caused Muslim musicians to flee to the countryside where they blended their style of music with Hindu folk music to create a style of music still known as Mughal music.

### **Decline of the Mughals**

It was during the reign of Aurangzeb that two major seeds of Mughal decline were sown. One was the over-extension of his empire in the conquest of all but the southern tip of India. The other was his persecution of Hindus, a reversal of the traditional Mughal policy of tolerance. Together, these bred disaffection among the people and drained the empire's resources. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Mughal Empire went into rapid decline, allowing a new people with a new culture, the British, to take over.

## **Early Chinese Civilization Unit 8: Early Chinese Civilization**

# FC53 Early China (1500-221 BCE) and the recurring pattern of Chinese history



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"With harmony at home there will be order in the nation. With order in the nation there will be peace in the world." — *Confucius*

## The geographic factor

Far to the east of the civilizations developing in Egypt and Mesopotamia another great hydraulic civilization, China, was evolving. As with Egypt and Mesopotamia, geography heavily influenced the development of Chinese

civilization. For one thing, the eastward flow of the rivers from the mountains in the west also meant that China's most fertile land was in the coastal lowlands in the east. Even today, 80% of China's population lives in the eastern third of the country. Throughout its history, this factor has given China a vast concentrated reservoir of human resources to draw upon for its wealth and power.

Secondly, China is largely isolated from the rest of the world by rain forests to the south, some of the highest mountains in the world to the west, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and vast grasslands (steppe) and deserts to the north. Direct contact with other civilizations would be rare, although occasional influences have passed back and forth between China and the rest of the world with profound effects. For the most part, however, China evolved largely in isolation and saw itself as the "Middle Kingdom", both unique and superior to other cultures. This attitude would create difficulties, especially in the modern era when growing contact with the outside world forced China to deal with different cultures.

Another dominant feature of China's geography has been its rivers, in particular the Huang He (Yellow), Yangtze, and Xi Jiang. The Yellow River valley in the north was particularly important as the birthplace of Chinese civilization, because its irregular rainfall and devastating floods forced the Chinese to organize massive irrigation and flood control projects. Such organization required a strict hierarchy of authority, which influenced subsequent Chinese history.

## The Shang Dynasty (c.1500-1028 B.C.E.)

By 1500 B.C.E., China's geography helped lead to one of history's early hydraulic civilizations in the Yellow River Valley under the Shang, the first of the dynasties into which Chinese history is traditionally divided. The Shang and various local nobles who ruled in their name combined both government and priestly functions. As a result, no distinct or elaborate class of priests emerged in China as happened in other early civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egypt.

China saw several technical developments during the Shang period in the way of silk textiles, carving in ivory and jade, and especially bronze technology. Bronze artifacts from the Shang period are some of the finest examples of metalworking found in any Bronze Age culture. Among those artifacts were bronze arms and armor which, along with the horse drawn chariot, gave Shang armies an edge over their enemies and allowed the expansion of Chinese civilization.

Another advance during this time was writing. Chinese writing was and remains ideographic, being based on pictures rather than sounds. Such a script required many more symbols to memorize, making it harder to read and seriously restricting the number of literate people. However, ideographic writing had one benefit. Since it was not based on the sounds of any particular language, it was readily adaptable to different dialects of Chinese and even non-Chinese languages in East Asia such as Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. As a result, Chinese culture spread and became the predominant cultural influence across East Asia.

## The pattern of Chinese history

A basic recurring pattern has repeated itself throughout Chinese history. A new dynasty would take over and revive Chinese civilization in two ways. First, it would restore the army, the Great Wall, government and bureaucracy. It would also lower taxes, redistribute land to the peasants, and rebuild the irrigation and flood control systems. Together, these would create a strong and prosperous society until lazy emperors took over and neglected their duties, allowing corrupt officials, high taxes, powerful nobles who took the peasants' lands, and the decay of the army and Great Wall. This would lead to peasant revolts from within and raids and invasions from without that together would weaken the government, causing more corruption, high taxes, military decay, and powerful nobles oppressing the peasants. Eventually, a new dynasty would seize power and start the cycle over again.

One concept combining religion and politics that was central to this process and China's political thinking was the *Mandate of Heaven*. This said that a ruling dynasty had the mandate or approval of Heaven to rule as long as there was peace and prosperity. However, natural and man-made disasters were signs that the dynasty was not doing its

job and that the mandate had been withdrawn and passed to a new dynasty. Thus the Mandate of Heaven was a double-edged sword, justifying the power and rule of a successful dynasty on the one hand, but also justifying revolution when things went wrong.

## The Zhou Dynasty (1028-256 B.C.E.)

The Shang Dynasty prospered until weak rulers allowed the realm to fragment into various warlord states. Eventually, this situation enticed nomadic tribes from the North-west to come in. One of these tribes, the Zhou, eventually assumed power as the next dynasty to rule China.

By 700 B.C.E., the Zhou had succumbed to the temptation of the softer cities in the East and gone into decline. Powerful warlords carved out their own principalities while giving the Zhou emperors only nominal allegiance. Naturally, these warlords turned on each other with increasing ferocity in a period known as the age of "the Warring States" (481-221 B.C.E.). However, despite this turmoil, Chinese civilization continued to spread and advance thanks to several innovations. First of all, the use of gold and copper coins replacing such things as shells and rolls of silk as the primary mediums of exchange made trade much easier and put more wealth into circulation. Secondly, the use of oxen to draw plows and the introduction of iron farm implements enabled Chinese peasants to clear more land, produce more food, and raise China's population and wealth dramatically.

## Confucianism and Taoism

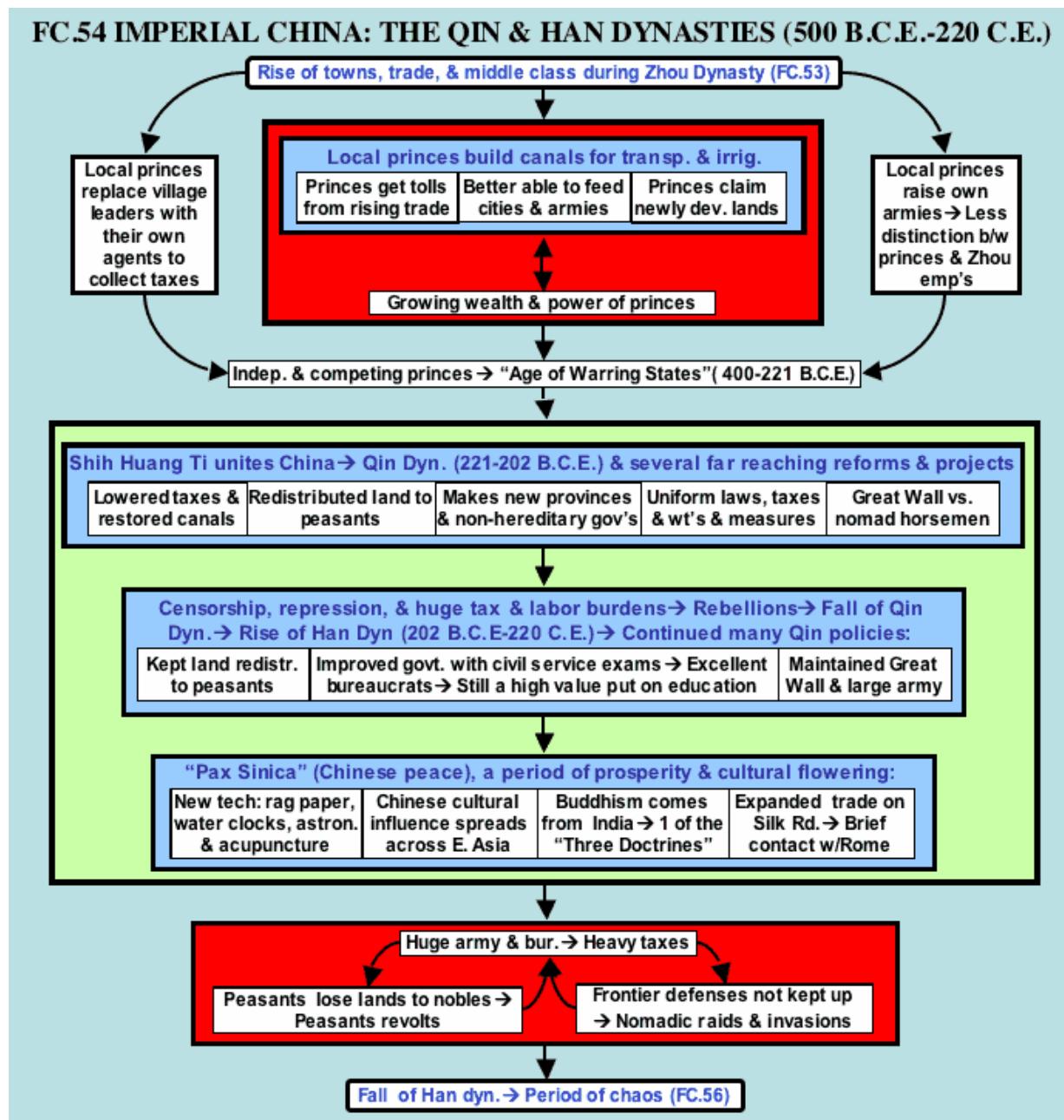
Still, this was a turbulent period which sparked a good deal of intellectual ferment, leading to two very different philosophies that together would become essential parts of Chinese culture: Confucianism and Taoism.

Kung Fu-tzu (known to the West as Confucius) was born in 551 B.C.E. He started his career as a government official, but later became a traveling teacher who attracted many students. He saw the key to China's stability in a strict observance of rituals and traditions. Among these rituals was ancestor worship, which had been an integral part of Chinese religion for centuries. However, Confucianism was not a religion, but rather a systematic philosophy for maintaining peace and harmony in this world. (Confucius himself said that he knew too little about this world to even begin worrying about the next. That would have to take care of itself in due time.) Central to Confucius' philosophy was a strict hierarchy of relationships, the five most important being those between ruler and ruled, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brother, and friend and friend. As long as the proper conduct and respect took place in these relationships, overall harmony would prevail. As Confucius saw it, a harmonious society rested firmly on a harmonious family structure. Confucius also advocated a civil service that got its positions through merit (in particular education and knowledge of the classics) rather than through birth or personal connections. Although not too popular in his own day, Confucius' ideas later had a profound impact on Chinese government and society that carry on to the present day.

Lao-tze (600's B.C.E.) founded the other great Chinese philosophy of the day, *Taoism*, which differed from Confucianism much as night differs from day. Whereas Confucianism provided a very strict framework for dealing with civilized society, Lao-tze advocated escape from that society and a return to our natural state through contemplation of the *Tao* (the Way), the cosmic principle through which the harmony of the universe was maintained. He saw everything in nature and the universe as being balanced between two complementary forces: the active male *Yang* ("sunlit") and the passive female *Yin* ("shaded"). Rather than seeing one as superior to the other, Lao-tze saw a truly healthy and harmonious person or society as being perfectly balanced between the active *Yang* and passive *Yin*. An example of this is the Chinese martial art, Tai Chi, which strives to use an opponent's own strength and force to knock him off balance. Lao-tze saw disease, floods, famines and wars as the result of an imbalance in nature, often caused by human actions. By the same token, any attempts to conform to strict government or personal codes of discipline were artificial and deformed human nature. Taoist ideas would strongly influence Chinese art, especially landscape painting, medicine with its idea of keeping a body in balance, and even Sun-tzu's *Art of War* that advocated dexterity and balance in conformity with nature rather than merely the use of brute force.

As different as Confucianism and Taoism were, they each had a profound impact on Chinese culture. Later, with the addition of Buddhism, the three philosophies would be known as the Three Doctrines. However, rather than competing with one another, each philosophy would fulfill a particular need in China's culture. Together they would give it a balance that would make it uniquely Chinese.

## FC54 The Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BCE-220 CE)



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"You won the world from horseback, but can you rule it from horseback?"— Minister to Liu Pang, founder of the Han dynasty

## The Later Zhou (772-221 B.C.E.)

The early period of the Zhou dynasty, known as "Spring and Autumn" (722-481 B.C.), saw relative stability and the growth of trade, towns, and a middle class of merchants and artisans. However, this prosperity contained the seeds of the Zhou's decline, since it gave local princes in the provinces the resources to do three things. First, they built canals which themselves had three effects. For one thing, they further increased trade, thus giving the princes more tolls and taxes. They also improved transportation of grain, allowing them to feed their cities, armies, and bureaucrats better. And finally, they led to the cultivation of new lands that the princes could claim for themselves. Together, these effects gave the princes more wealth and power that they could use to develop more canals and so on.

Secondly, princes and local nobles started appointing their own agents to collect taxes instead of doing it indirectly through local village leaders, as had been the custom. Finally, the princes started arming peasants and using them in their armies alongside the traditional feudal levies supplied by their vassals. This especially reduced the distinction between the Zhou emperors and their princely subjects in the provinces.

Together, these developments gave the princes more control over their own local nobles and establish more tightly centralized states. This in turn led to increased warfare between the princes who now had much greater resources for waging war than before. With larger armies using peasant levies as well as noble warriors, the intensity of fighting increased and the old courtesies of warfare and diplomacy that had governed relations between princes and nobles disappeared. The resulting chaos, known as the age of "Warring States" (481-221 B.C.E.), generated a good deal of intellectual ferment that provided the background for such philosophers as Confucius concerned about the decay of values.

## Qin Dynasty (256-202 B.C.E.)

By the third century B.C.E., seven major warlord states had emerged. Among these was the Qin Dynasty in the north, which built up a powerful state through sweeping internal reforms and the creation of a powerful army using horse archers modeled after those used by their nomadic enemies. By 221 B.C.E., the Qin ruler, Shih Huang Ti, had replaced the last Zhou emperor, and ruled all of China. In fact, his title, Shih Huang Ti, meant *first universal emperor*, while his dynasty's name (also spelled Ch'in) came to represent all of the people of the Middle Kingdom which we today still call China.

Shih Huang Ti was a harsh, but efficient ruler who brought China under a single autocratic rule. He lowered taxes and restored canals and irrigation systems. He also redistributed land to the peasants in an attempt to break up the nobles' power. Along these lines he broke up China's old provinces and loyalties and created new ones ruled by non-hereditary governors who could not build their power up in one place over several generations. Shih Huang Ti also created a unified law code, tax system, coinage, and system of weights and measures so that government and commerce could proceed smoothly.

The Qin emperor had numerous building programs, among which were roads and canals to promote trade as well as the swift movement of armies, a huge capital at Hsien Yang where all the most powerful families of the realm were required to move, and a fabulous tomb guarded by 6000 larger than life terra-cotta soldiers in full battle order armed with bronze weapons, chariots, and terra-cotta horses.

However, the most famous and far-reaching of Shih Huang Ti's building projects was the Great Wall built to contain the nomadic horsemen from the north. In fact, previous generations of warlords had built several local walls to protect their realms from the nomads and each other. Shih Huang Ti, in a mere seven years, connected them into one continuous defensive system 25 feet high, 15 feet thick, and stretching some 1850 miles through mountains and deserts. The cost in human lives was staggering, as thousands died from exposure to the elements, hunger, and exhaustion, causing Chinese peasants to call the Great Wall "China's longest cemetery."

Manning the entire wall was beyond the means of even the Chinese. However, it was built more against the nomads' horses than the nomads themselves. As long as the wall was kept in repair and the intermittent forts and

towers were manned, the nomads would be held at bay by two factors. First, they lacked siege engines for attacking manned forts. Second, they would not scale the unmanned sections, since that would involve leaving their horses behind. Only when the wall was in disrepair and unmanned during times of weak government and turmoil, could the nomads break (or bribe their way) into China. Otherwise the Great Wall served its purpose as succeeding Chinese dynasties would repair, modify, and expand it as the real and symbolic boundary between civilization and the nomads.

Shih Huang Ti's reforms may have unified China into one empire and people, but of the heavy burden in taxes and labor needed to support his building projects made him very unpopular. Another source of resentment was the emperor's refusal to tolerate any dissenting ideas, especially those of the Confucianists who preferred the traditional feudal structure of government to his more impersonal bureaucracy. Therefore, he ordered the burning of all works of philosophy that in any way contradicted his policies. He even had some 460 dissenting scholars executed, supposedly by burying them alive. Although some scholars tried to entrust these works to memory so they could be written down later, there were certainly mistakes in the recopying, and there is no telling how much was lost. This purge also deprived the emperor of good advisors and poisoned the atmosphere at court, making it difficult to create sound policies. Therefore, his death in 210 B.C.E. triggered a number of revolts and civil wars that led to the rapid fall of the Qin Dynasty and the rise of the Han Dynasty.

## The Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.)

Liu Pang, the founder of the Han Dynasty, found China worn out by civil strife and heavy taxes and also facing threats from the northern nomads. Liu Pang (also known as Kao Tsu) and his successors tackled each of these problems and laid the foundations for one of China's true golden ages. Although the Han reversed the more repressive aspects of the Qin dynasty, they also built upon many of their other policies. In that sense, the Qin and Han dynasties should be viewed together as forming the basis of Chinese imperial power and cultural influence in East Asia.

For one thing, the Han rulers reduced Shih Huang Ti's more excessive demands by eliminating forced labor, lowering taxes, and restoring the Classics, although the accuracy of that restoration is still in dispute. However, they did uphold the Qin Dynasty's more enlightened reforms, especially redistribution of land to the peasants, making them much more popular than the Qin and the foundations for one of the high points in Chinese history and civilization.

In government, the Han ended the Qin policy of using non-hereditary governors and reverted to the older practice of using royal family members instead. However, they continued and expanded the Qin use of professional bureaucrats to run the day-to-day machinery of government. This was the result of growing influence of Confucianism at court, since the Han dynasty saw its emphasis on ritual and tradition as a valuable justification and support for their rule. Therefore, it instituted the civil service exams that determined applicants' potential as bureaucrats by testing their knowledge of Confucian teachings, now the official state philosophy. Although modern civil service exams test supposedly more practical skills, such as math and reading, to choose bureaucrats, the idea of hiring government officials on the basis of ability rather than birth or personal connections traces its roots back to the Chinese civil service exams of the Han dynasty. Despite China's varying fortunes, the Chinese civil service was generally the best in the world until the 1800's.

The backbone of the Chinese bureaucracy was a class of scholars known as the civil gentry who would run Chinese government and administration until the early 1900's. Since gaining admission into this class depended on knowledge of Confucianism rather than birth or connections, many middle class families advanced their sons' fortunes in society by investing heavily in their education. Even after the demise of the civil service exam system, this emphasis on education has remained a powerful factor in East Asian societies, helping to account for their high literacy rates and rapid economic development in recent history.

Finally, there was the ever-present threat of the northern nomads. The Han emperors, here also continuing the work started by the Qin, maintained and expanded the Great Wall and a huge army to bring the nomads under control. Although Han armies met frequent defeats, their persistence did establish a semi-civilized buffer zone in the north.

However, especially in times of turmoil, semi-civilized nomads would often prove to be even more dangerous to China, since they combined both their own restless nomadic energies with knowledge of Chinese civilization in order to organize powerful states that could conquer China. But, as always, such invaders would eventually be absorbed by Chinese civilization. As the historian, Fernand Braudel put it, China let in such invaders and then shut the door behind them.

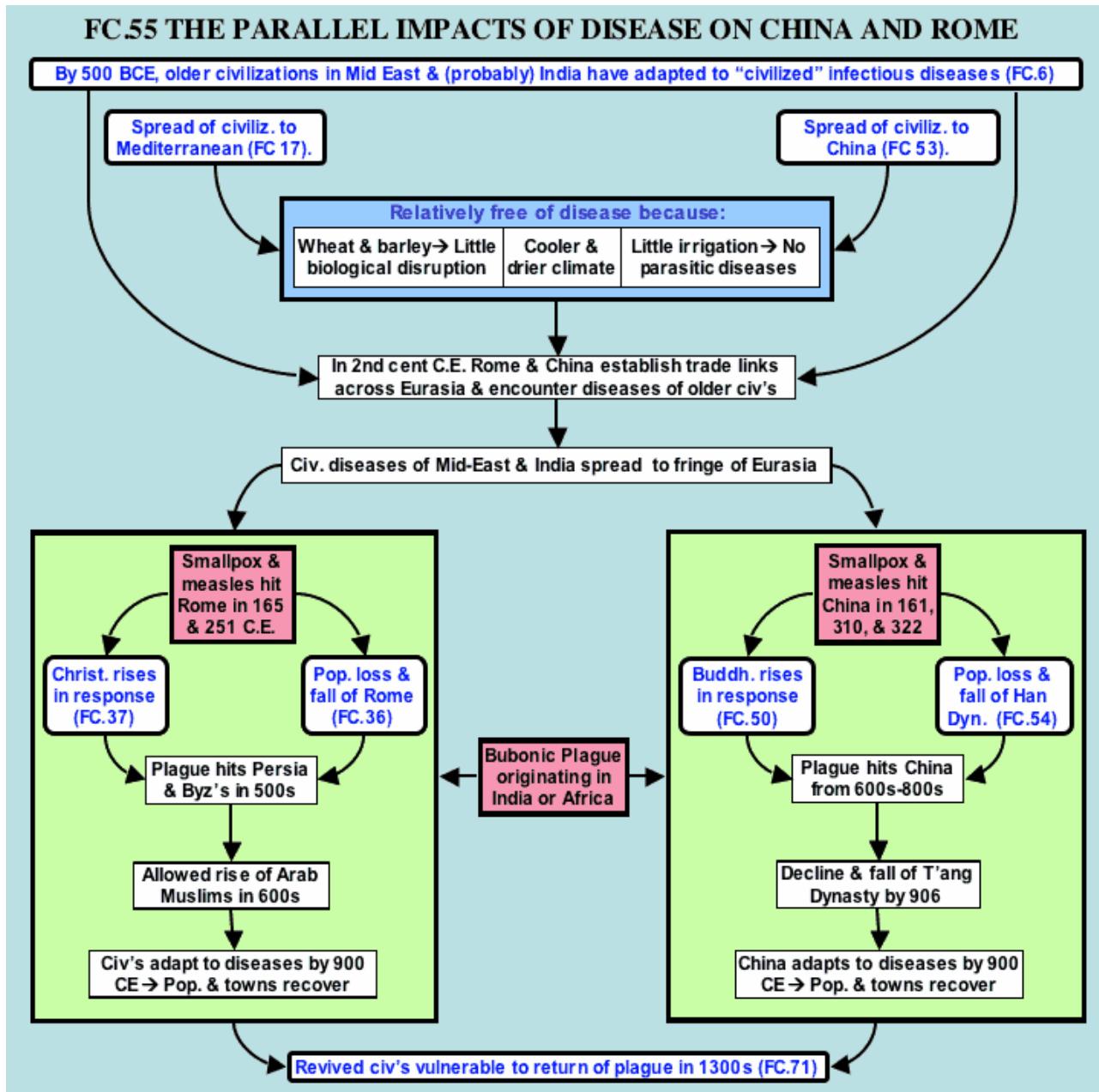
For nearly four centuries, Han reforms and rule provided a strong empire which expanded its political and cultural influence southward into the rice growing regions of Southeast Asia, northward into the nomadic regions, and northeastward into Korea and Manchuria. Internally, the Han provided a period of peace and prosperity that largely resembled the Roman Empire then flourishing at the opposite end of Eurasia. Science and technology flourished, making China the leading culture in those fields for centuries. The invention of paper (made from rags), the sundial, water clocks, and surgery using acupuncture were some of the main accomplishments of this period. New forms of literature, especially, history, poetry, and diaries, were developed.

Buddhism started gaining influence in China at this time despite initial resistance from the Confucianists and government. However it gained popularity and became the final part of the Three Doctrines of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Whereas the three religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam would compete, sometimes violently, for adherents, the Chinese were able to incorporate all of the Three Doctrines into their culture since they fulfilled various needs, Confucianism being a very practical and structured way to run one's daily life and career, Taoism being a more natural way to enjoy life outside of work, and Buddhism being a preparation for what lies beyond this life. As many Chinese saw it, one is Confucianist during the day at work, Taoist in the evening when relaxing, and Buddhist at night when going to bed.

Trade also prospered as never before, both within China and with other cultures. The most renowned example of this foreign trade was the fabled Silk Road that carried silk, furs, cinnamon, iron, and rhubarb westward across Central Asia through any number of middlemen and eventually to Rome. Silk was a luxury in Rome that was literally worth its weight in gold. In order to stretch it out, the Romans wove silk into a very loose gauze-like fabric that the Chinese would hardly have recognized. Interestingly enough, the Romans and Chinese did not meet face to face until 166 C.E. when a Roman envoy finally made it to China. Unfortunately, both civilizations were on the verge of their respective declines, and contact was lost soon afterwards.

As powerful and prosperous as Han China was, it had an inherent weakness, namely that it was based on a huge army and bureaucracy that put a tremendous strain on the economy. This had two main results. First of all, the peasants, who bore the brunt of the taxes, increasingly lost their lands to nobles whose power grew in opposition to the central government. This caused revolts both by oppressed peasants and power hungry nobles. Secondly, as the economy faltered under the strain of heavy taxes, nomadic raids stepped up, which hurt the economy even more, triggering more raids, and so on. Together, these raids and revolts weakened the Han Dynasty, forcing it to increase the army and taxes, and so on. Finally, in 220 C.E., the Han Dynasty fell, ushering in another period of turmoil.

## **FC55The parallel impacts of disease on Chinese and Roman history**



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*"In the area south of the Yangtze, the land is low and the climate humid; adult males die young"*

-- Ssu-ma Ch'ien, father of Ch. historiography (145-87 B.C.):

By 500 B.C.E., the earliest civilizations on the Middle East had expanded their empires to the limits of the Middle East and a fairly stable balance had been achieved where they had at least partially adapted to the parasitic and infectious diseases of the region and evolved into "childhood diseases" where concentrations of populations allowed them to survive as a chronic, but usually not fatal, nuisance.

However, the newer areas of Eurasia where civilization spread, the Yellow River in China and the Mediterranean in the West, were relatively free of infectious diseases. This was largely because wheat, and barley, the main crops grown there, were native to the regions, thus causing relatively little biological disruption. This contrasted with areas that practiced irrigation for non-native crops, which exposed people to water borne parasitic diseases.

Although there was irrigation in the Yellow River area of China, its cooler and drier climate led to considerably fewer problems with parasitic diseases than the earliest hydraulic civilizations encountered. However, when the Chinese spread southward into the Yangtze River region with its hotter and more humid climate, they encountered water and insect borne diseases to which it took centuries for them to adapt.

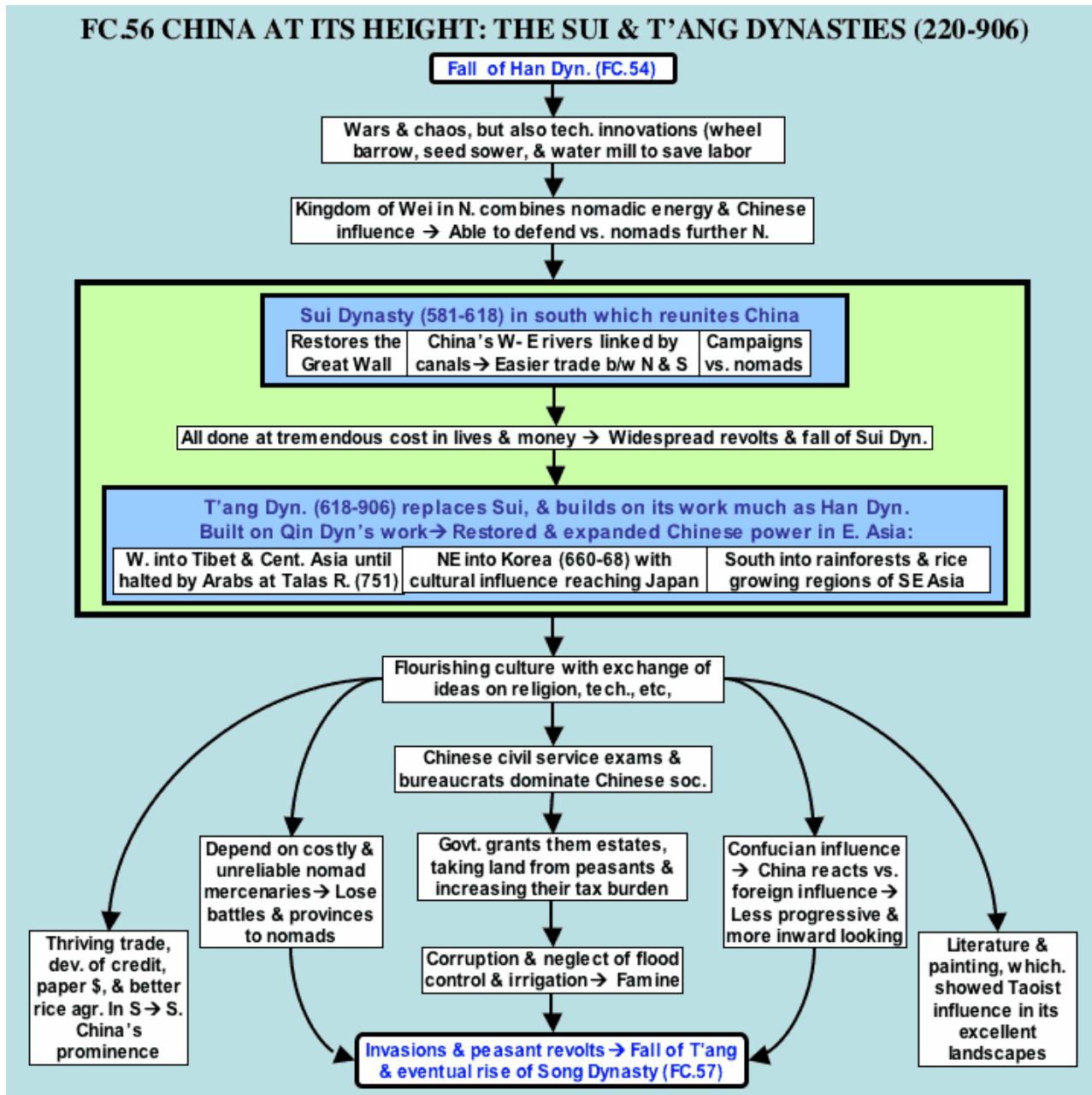
In the second century C.E., as Rome and China established trade links across Eurasia, they also encountered the older infectious diseases of the older civilizations in between. As a result, these diseases spread to the eastern and western fringes of Eurasia with very similar results.

In the East, small pox and measles, diseases never previously encountered there, hit China in 161, 310, and 322. Such unprecedented disasters led people to question traditional Chinese beliefs and opened the way for the rise of Buddhism. The severe population loss these outbreaks caused also contributed to the fall of the Han Dynasty and several centuries of turmoil, until the revival under the Sui and T'ang Dynasties. However, in the 600s, the eruption of a new disease, arising from India or Africa, bubonic plague, caused another huge loss of life and probably contributed to the decline and fall of the T'ang Dynasty by 906. After 900, the Chinese had adapted somewhat to this scourge, and China saw its population and towns expand rapidly under the Sung Dynasty.

In the West, the Roman Empire also suffered the initial onset of smallpox and measles in 165 and 251, helping lead to a period of anarchy in the third century and the eventual fall of the Empire by 500. And, like in China, people questioned the old pagan religions, leading the growing popularity and eventual triumph of Christianity. Then, as population and prosperity were recovering, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean, bubonic plague hit in the 500s, allowing the sudden rise of the Arab Muslims in the 600s. By 900, the plague had also subsided in the Mediterranean and Western Europe, allowing the revival of towns and trade.

Unfortunately, these newly revived cities with their concentrations of populations were especially vulnerable to onset of a new strain of the plague in the 1300s, triggering possibly the greatest demographic disaster in history.

## **FC56The Sui and T'ang dynasties (220-906 CE)**



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## The Six Dynasties Period (220-581 C.E.)

The fall of the Han Dynasty brought in a period of political anarchy known as the Six Dynasties Period. During this time, China was divided into three main kingdoms: Wei in the north where wheat and millet were grown and nomadic pressure was most intense, Shu Han in the west, and Wu in the rice growing regions of the south-east where many Chinese fled to escape the chaos in the north. The kingdom of Wei, which was situated between other nomads in the north and the Chinese in the south, was the first kingdom to successfully combine nomadic culture and Chinese influence. As a result, it was more organized than its nomadic neighbors while still keeping its nomadic energy, making it able to protect Chinese civilization in the south from the wilder nomads in the north. In addition, there were several technological innovations to compensate for labor shortages at this time: the wheel barrow, watermill, and a primitive seed-sower, all of which allowed Chinese culture to prosper more than the Germanic heirs of Rome were able to at this time in Western Europe.

## The Sui Dynasty (581-618)

After several centuries of various dynasties competing for power, the Sui Dynasty reunited China. Much as the Qin Dynasty had laid the foundations for the Han Dynasty's greatness, the Sui Dynasty, despite the shortness of its reign, laid the foundations for the T'ang Dynasty's accomplishments through several endeavors. The Sui restored the Great Wall and mounted a number of huge expeditions against the northern nomads. They helped restore foreign trade, especially along the Silk Road. Likewise, they restored internal trade by connecting China's main rivers, which all run from west to east, with a north-south channel known as the Grand Canal. As a result, trade and travel between North and South China became much easier. Unfortunately, much as with the Qin Dynasty, these military expeditions and building projects involved a tremendous cost in lives and money. This triggered widespread revolts and the overthrow of the Sui Dynasty by a new dynasty, the T'ang, which would take Chinese civilization and imperial power to new heights.

## The T'ang Dynasty (618-906)

The T'ang were a military family from the wild northwest frontier and were especially skilled in the use of cavalry. The T'ang, themselves devoted horsemen, bred thousands of horses for their cavalry and imported polo from Persia, which even ladies from court played. Using their cavalry along with large numbers of allied nomadic cavalry and peasant infantry, the T'ang could deal with the Northern nomads and expand Chinese rule in several directions. After stubborn resistance, they conquered Korea in 668 and saw Chinese culture take deeper root in Japan. The T'ang also conquered North Vietnam, then known as Annan (modern Annam), meaning "pacify the South". They drove westward against Turkish tribes in Central Asia, established their power and influence in Tibet, Afghanistan, and India. In 611, Chinese forces even briefly restored the last Sassanid Persian ruler, Peroz, against the rising tide of Arab Muslim conquest. When the Persian king was finally overthrown for good, he found refuge in the Chinese court. Later, the Arabs would defeat a Chinese army at the Talas River in 751 and bring T'ang expansion to a halt.

The unprecedented foreign influences that empire brought into T'ang China were welcomed with a new open-mindedness. Foreign fashions, music, cuisine, art, and religious influences from Central Asia, India, and Persia found favor at the court in China's capital, Ch'ang-an. Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism all found their way to China, while Nestorian Christians, who were branded heretics and exiled by Rome in the fifth century, gained converts across Central Asia and were granted toleration in China as well. Later on, religious persecution (841-45) would eliminate Christianity, although the other religions would survive. Buddhism especially became absorbed into the fabric of Chinese religions, assuming a place alongside Taoism and Confucianism as one of the Three Doctrines which complemented one another rather than acting as competition against each other, as happened between Judaism, Christianity and Islam further west.

Cultural influence worked both ways, however, as Chinese culture and technology spread to Korea, Japan, and even the tribes in Central Asia. One example of this influence was the spread of rag paper, which was invented, in the early Christian era. Most likely it reached the Muslim world as a result of the Battle of the Talas River in 751, when the victorious Arabs captured Chinese technicians skilled in its manufacture. Eventually, it would spread to Western Europe where it would be combined with another Chinese invention, block printing to create the printing press, one of the most dynamic and important inventions in history. While it is a European invention, its roots lie deep within Chinese history.

Drawing upon these foreign influences and combining them with its own dynamic energy, Chinese culture prospered and flourished under the T'ang Dynasty in three areas: the economy, government, and culture. China's economy prospered largely through trade that thrived both within China and with the outside world. Foreign trade prospered, especially along the Silk Road that maintained commerce and contact with other cultures further west. Although trade certainly thrived, little is known about it, since so much was controlled as government monopolies (e.g., salt, wine, iron, and tea) or interpreted as "tribute" from foreign lands and reciprocal "gifts" going back out. China's internal prosperity was especially reflected in its cities, which were the largest and most populous in the world. Foremost among these cities was the capital, Ch'ang-an with a population of some 2,000,000 people. It

was laid out in a rectangular grid five miles wide by six miles long and facing the cardinal directions in accordance with the Chinese concept of the cosmic plan.

One of these monopolies had a profound influence on the history of finance. In the early 800's, merchants selling tea to the government received government notes worth the hard cash value of the tea. These exchange notes, known as "flying money," proved to be popular, since they eliminated the need for carrying heavy coins. The use of credit slips soon spread among Chinese merchants and moneychangers and eventually westward to the Arab world, where they were known as *sakk*, and eventually to Western Europe where the term *sakk* became check. Meanwhile, in 1024, the Chinese government would expand the use of credit slips by issuing the first true paper currency in history.

Chinese agriculture also prospered under the T'ang Dynasty. For one thing, careful censuses and an equitable system of distributing land and the tax burden among the peasants strived to ensure their prosperity. Second, the system of canals connecting China's rivers meant that relief could be brought to famine stricken areas. Finally, agriculture saw particular progress in the South where new strains of rice and better farming techniques dramatically increased crop yields with resulting population growth. Eventually, under the next major dynasty, the Song, the balance of power and population would shift from the North, where Chinese civilization first evolved, to the South.

Power and prosperity also brought a flowering of the arts in China. Buddhism, coming from India, had an especially profound influence on Chinese sculpture. However, it was in poetry and painting that one could especially see the Chinese genius at work. Both poetry and painting showed a typically Taoist love of nature through their portrayals of flowers, mountains, rivers, and clouds, but rarely the sea, since the Chinese were traditionally a land loving people.

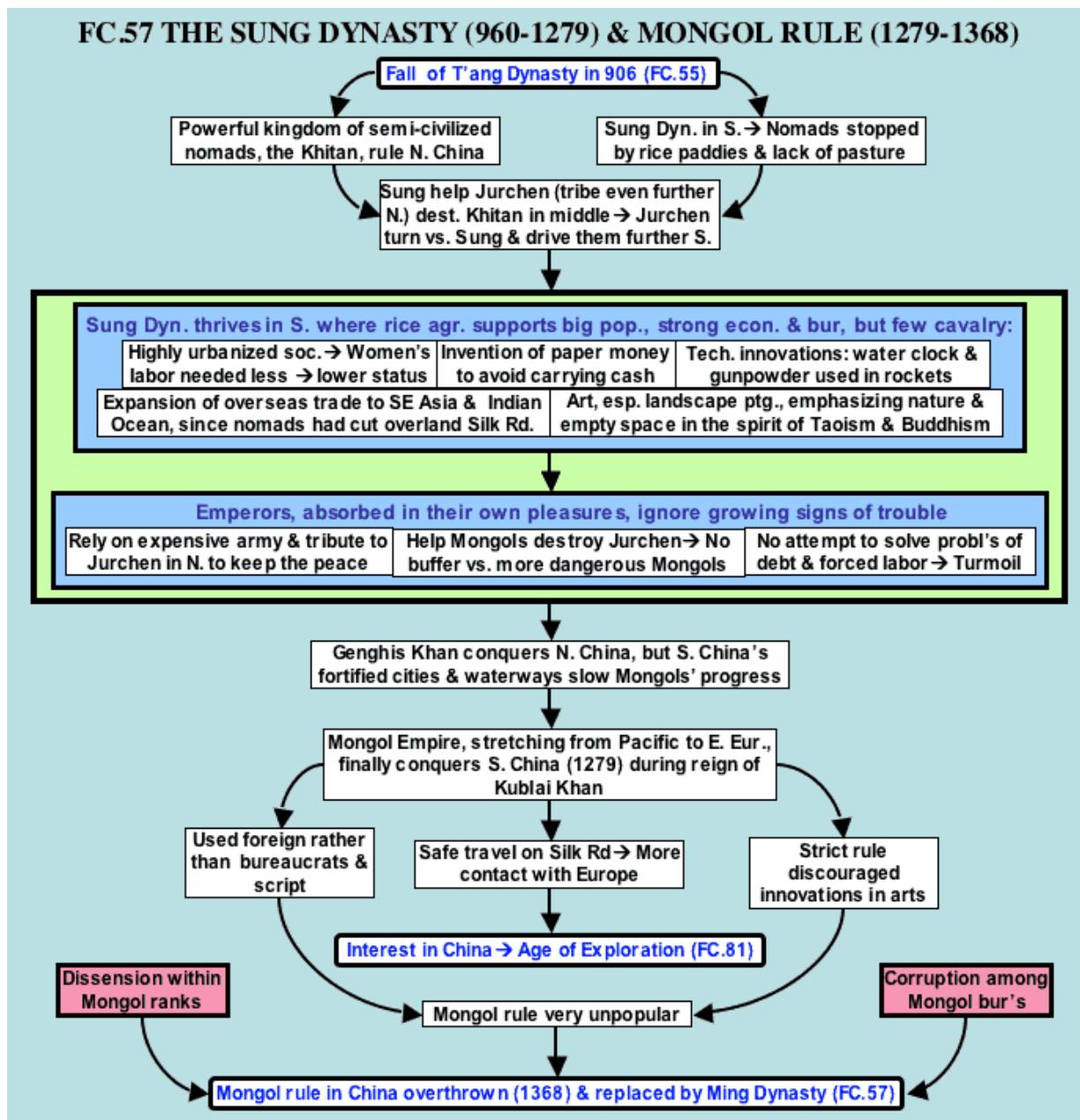
Another development was the further improvement of the civil service exam system and the emergence of the official gentry who had passed these exams as the main bureaucrats of China. This system had been used by the Han Dynasty, but only in conjunction with the older patronage system favoring nobles and political connections. Now the exam alone determined who attained bureaucratic positions in China. However, since education was expensive, only the rich could afford to train one son per family to take the exam. As a result, the officials became a virtually hereditary class. The training and exam stressed Confucianist classics more than mathematics and law, the purpose being to cultivate wisdom and morality in China's officials. In the centuries to come, China's stability and resilience would largely be based on these official gentry.

In 690, the official gentry's fortunes rose further when the only woman to rule China in her own right, the empress Wu, seized power. Her fear of the T'ang military aristocracy in the Northwest probably spurred her to complete the transformation of the civil service in order to favor a completely civilian class of bureaucrats whose status was based on merit. However, their rise to power meant a corresponding decline of the military nobles, which eventually would weaken China's defenses and help lead to the decline of the T'ang Dynasty.

## Fall of the T'ang Dynasty

Several factors led to the fall of the T'ang Dynasty, three of them related to the triumph of the official gentry and the civil service system. For one thing, the government granted the gentry estates, thus taking land from the peasants and increasing their tax burden. This, along with a series of famines partly caused by government corruption and neglect of flood control and irrigation systems, triggered peasant revolts. Secondly, the gentry's dominance of the government caused the emperors to ignore the army and start relying on nomadic mercenaries who were more expensive and much less reliable than native recruits. As a result, T'ang armies suffered a number of defeats, notably at the Talas River against the Arabs in 751, making Islam rather than Buddhism the dominant religion in Central Asia. The weakened army invited invasions from without and revolts from within. Finally, the rise of the official gentry unleashed a Confucianist reaction against foreign influences in China. From now on, China would be more inward looking, sometimes blocking out new ideas that could have been of great use.

# FC57 The Sung & Mongol dynasties (906-1368)



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**The Sung Dynasty (960-1279).** The fall of the T'ang Dynasty ushered in a brief period of chaos referred to as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (906-960). Despite this turmoil, Chinese civilization maintained itself, especially in the South where many people fled to avoid the northern nomads. Out of this chaos, two new kingdoms emerged.

First of all, the semi-nomadic Khitan built a powerful realm in the North that even encompassed the Great Wall. What made the Khitan so dangerous was that they had partially absorbed Chinese culture, thus fusing their nomadic energy with Chinese sophistication. In the middle Ages, many people mistook the Khitan as the Chinese and referred to China as Cathay (land of the Khitan). Throughout this period, the Khitan kept up pressure against a

new Chinese dynasty, the Sung, who brought all but the northernmost provinces and the Great Wall under their control. Sung government was efficient, maintaining the irrigation and flood control projects to ensure economic prosperity. The Sung also weakened the influence of the military in favor of the bureaucratic gentry who were hostile toward the military. This and the lack of pasture for good cavalry horses in the south caused the Sung to pay less attention to maintaining a good native-born military and to rely more heavily on expensive mercenaries and paying tribute to keep their northern enemies at bay. Therefore, when the Sung did finally attack the Khitan, they were no match for their mobile horse archers who forced them onto the defensive.

In the early twelfth century, the Sung called in another nomadic people from further north, the Jurchen ruled by the Chin dynasty, to destroy the Khitan realm. Unfortunately, the Jurchen, proving less civilized and more dangerous than the Khitan, turned against the Sung and forced them even further south after 1126. One advantage of ruling in the South was that its numerous waterways and lack of pasture impeded invasions by any nomadic cavalry, thus keeping Sung China relatively secure.

Despite these pressures, the Southern Sung Dynasty (1126-1279) still flourished with a thriving economy based largely on rice agriculture. This helped create a more urban society, with five Chinese cities reaching populations of one million. Ironically, the more comfortable urban culture hurt the status of Chinese women, since their labor, which was so vital on the farm, was not needed nearly as much in town.

Economically, the Chinese were the first to use paper money, getting the idea from the bills of credit used under the T'ang Dynasty. The advantage of paper money was that it saved the burden of transporting heavy cash (which was all in copper coins), especially taxes, long distances. As its nickname, "flying money", implies, paper money was easy to print (thanks to block printing also invented by the Chinese), and its overuse later on triggered inflation. Even such measures as scenting it with perfume or sewing in threads of silk failed to solve this problem that still bothers governments today.

The Chinese economy, largely blocked from overland trade to the northwest, saw rapid expansion through the vigorous pursuit of sea-borne trade to South-east Asia and into the Indian Ocean. Unlike the northern Chinese, who preferred to remain on land, the Chinese in the South were more at ease with the sea. (Even today, a preponderance of Chinese immigrants to the United States originates from the southern parts of China.) Several technological innovations helped the Chinese in their maritime ventures. First of all there was the Chinese sailing ship, the *junk*, which was faster and several times larger than any European ships then sailing. It also had a sternpost rudder and separate watertight compartments, something European sailing ships would not be able to match until the 1800's. Another invention brought back by Arab traders to Europe that would be vital to later European explorations was the compass. For centuries, the Chinese had used the compass for divination and fortune telling before applying it to navigation. Chinese compasses pointed south, since that was where spring winds came from and was considered the most important direction on Chinese maps.

By 1200, the Chinese had replaced the Arabs as the dominant commercial power in the Indian Ocean, trading books, paintings, and porcelain along with silk, tin and lead. All this trade brought large numbers of foreign traders to China, many of whom settled down in self-contained communities where they could live under their own laws. One of the most prominent of these was a Jewish community that survived into the 1800's.

Two other Chinese inventions deserve mention here: the water-powered clock and gunpowder. The Chinese clock was powered through a complex system of gears and escapements. In addition to keeping daily time, it also tracked celestial time and the movement of the sun, moon, and planets for astrological purposes so the emperor would know the best time to embark upon various projects and ventures. Although it was an imperial monopoly, the clock made its way to Europe where it would be adapted in the later Middle Ages to tracking daily time. Eventually, the clock would heavily influence Western Civilization's concept of time by breaking it into precise and discrete units that still regiment our lives today.

Gunpowder, according to legend, was the accidental result of a Taoist alchemical experiment for replacing salt with salt petre (the active ingredient in gunpowder). Contrary to popular belief, the Chinese did use gunpowder for military purposes in the form of rockets and firing projectiles out of bamboo and metal tubes. Most likely, it made its way westward to Europe thanks to the Mongol conquest of China in the 1200's. Eventually, the Chinese

invention of gunpowder would be instrumental in the rise of the nation state in Western Europe and Europe's colonial dominance of the globe in the late 1800's and early 1900'.

The arts, in particular painting, flourished under the Sung Dynasty. Chinese painting heavily reflected Buddhist and Taoist values by emphasizing nature and even empty space. Some painters were so brilliant that they could create a painting that had to be viewed from multiple perspectives. This contrasted greatly with European painting, which put more emphasis on humans as the center of attention.

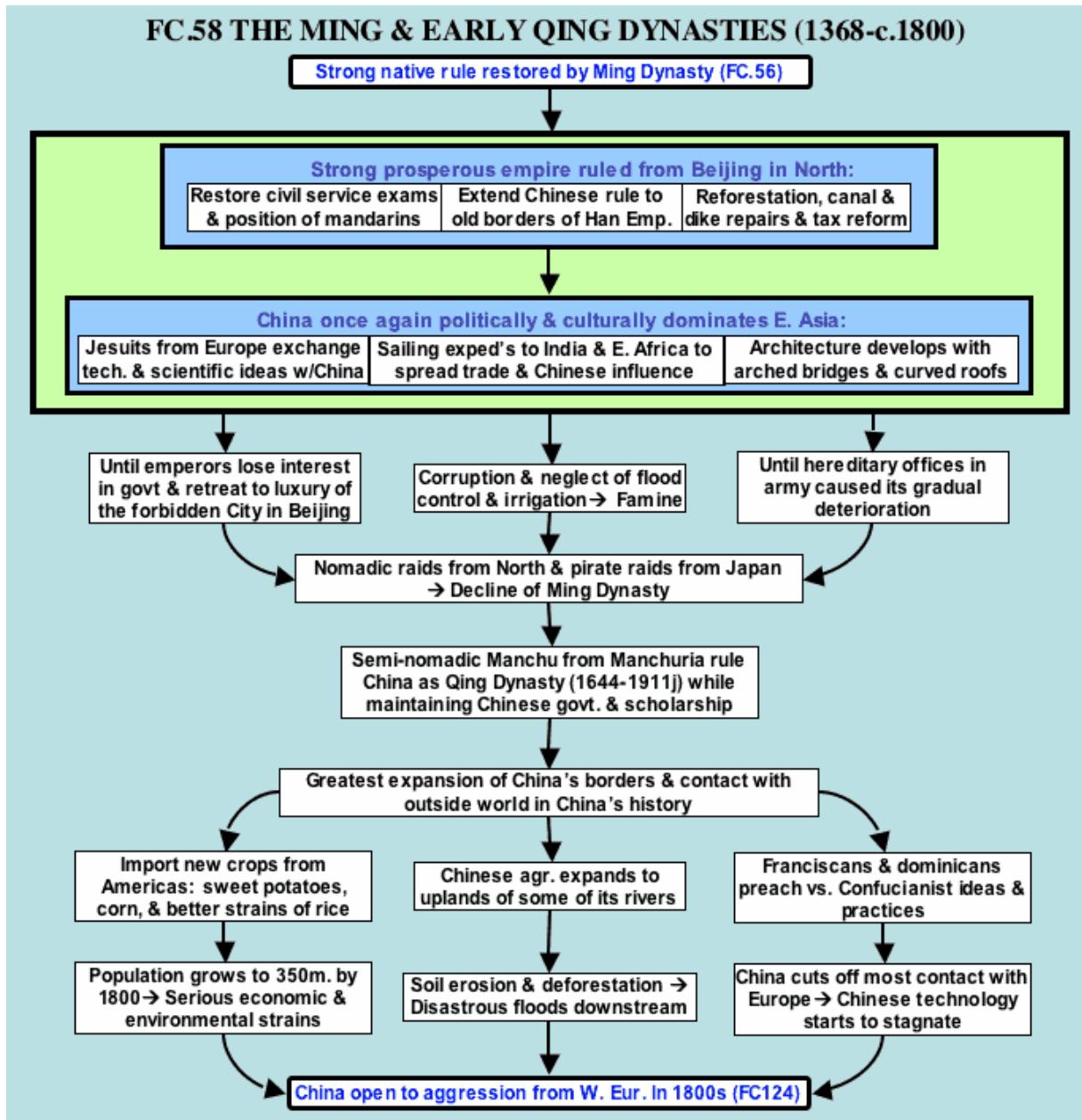
## **The Mongol Empire (1279-1368)**

Although the overland routes to the West were mostly cut off, the Sung Dynasty did see some trade, largely in the form of superior iron weapons, going north through the semi-civilized Jurchen to the much more dangerous Mongol tribes further north. In the late 1100's, the most remarkable nomadic leader of all time, Genghis Khan (1167-1227), combined the use of Chinese weapons, Mongol fierceness, and his own genius for organization and generalship to launch the conquest of the most far-flung empire in history. He succeeded in conquering northern China, but the large fortified cities, lack of pasture for the Mongol horses, and the vast network of waterways obstructing the way kept him from conquering the Sung Dynasty in the South. Therefore, he left it to his successors to complete the conquest, which his grandson, Kublai Khan, did in 1279. By that time, Mongol conquests spread from the Pacific to Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Although there were several virtually independent Mongol khanates, Kublai Khan was recognized, at least in theory, as the supreme ruler over all.

Mongol rule led to several changes in China and Asia. For one thing, the Mongols protected safe travel across Asia and reopened trade along the Silk Road. Because of this, Western Europe, then recovering from the Dark Ages, re-established contact with China, allowing numerous traders and missionaries to make their way there. Among these travelers was Marco Polo, whose account of his travels and the wonders of the East sparked a growing interest in China which would help stimulate the Age of Exploration some two centuries later.

The Mongols ruled with a brutal efficiency that not only discouraged any criticism of them, but also discouraged innovations in the arts. Among the Mongols' ruling policies was replacing the civil service exam system with the use of non-Chinese governors and officials and even a foreign script. However, in the 1300's, the civil service exam was restored as the Mongols in turn succumbed to the influence of Chinese civilization. Mongol rule was especially unpopular with the Chinese, who looked for any opportunity to revolt. Two factors helped provide that opportunity, dissension within the Mongol ranks and corruption among their bureaucrats. Finally, in 1368, the Chinese overthrew Mongol rule and established a new dynasty, the Ming, which would once again restore Chinese power and wealth.

## **FC58The Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-c.1800)**



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## The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

The expulsion of the Mongols from China in 1368 ushered in a new period of peace and prosperity for China under the Ming ("brilliant") Dynasty. The early Ming emperors revived Chinese power and wealth through their foreign, governmental, and economic policies. In the realm of foreign policy, several strong emperors aggressively extended Chinese power to the old borders of the Han Empire. Not surprisingly, the Ming Dynasty was especially concerned with the threat of the northern nomads who had so recently humiliated China. Therefore, they put forth a tremendous effort to subdue the nomads (with very limited success) and partially restored the Great Wall. The fortifications around the first capital, Nanjing, were 60 feet high and extended in a perimeter 20 miles long, the most massive urban fortifications in the world. In 1421, the Ming moved the capital to Beijing, only 40 miles from the northern frontier in order to keep a better eye on nomadic movements. Not only did this endanger the capital, since it was so close to the nomads, it also removed the government from contact with and understanding of the

more economically vibrant South. As it was, the nomads posed no real serious threat to China during most of the Ming Dynasty's rule.

Beijing itself became a magnificent city with 40-foot high walls around a perimeter of 14 miles. Central to the capital was the emperor's palace complex, known as the Forbidden City. Unlike Western architecture, which reaches ever skyward away from earth, as seen in Gothic cathedrals and skyscrapers, Chinese architecture aims for a more balanced and harmonious effect in the true Taoist spirit. The Forbidden City especially shows this, being spread out on a broad horizontal plane under the overarching dome of the blue sky, which counterbalances the effect of the high roofs of many of the government buildings and palaces. The overall effect is one of horizontal stability, emphasizing the permanence of the regime of the Son of Heaven (Chinese emperor).

The Ming reversed the unpopular policies of the Mongols and reinstated the system of civil service exams for selecting officials, thus restoring the Mandarins to prominence in Chinese society. They also retained the other features of government used by previous dynasties, such as the Six Ministries and the Censorate. The Censorate was largely concerned with preventing corruption and abuses by sending traveling censors to the provinces to hear complaints and investigate the conduct of local magistrates. Unfortunately, many censors were young officials being asked to report against senior officials who could seriously damage their careers later on. Since the censors had little protection against such reprisals, they often shrank from doing their jobs properly. However, the overall effect of Ming policies was to provide fair and efficient, though strict, government.

Ming economic policies similarly provided for China's prosperity during this period. Dikes and canals were repaired, while extensive land reclamation program was instituted, since some regions of China were totally depopulated from earlier Mongol depredations and neglect. The government offered tax exemptions lasting several years to any peasants who moved into the ruined areas, a policy which effectively revived much of China. Another policy was to encourage extensive reforestation, probably for shipbuilding purposes, although palm, mulberry, and lacquer trees were also planted for other economic purposes.

As a result of the Ming Dynasty's policies, China was again a strong and prosperous empire, making it the dominant political and cultural power in East Asia. China's cultural vibrancy can be seen in several aspects of the Ming era. For one thing, architecture flourished, as the Chinese constructed arched bridges and tall pagodas with graceful curved roofs. As stated above, the setting of these buildings in broad horizontal planes provided a more balanced effect than the lofty spires of cathedrals one found in Europe at that time.

Chinese science and technology at this time was largely bound up with newcomers from the West. The expulsion of the Mongols in 1368 effectively cut China off from the West for nearly two centuries. In fact, Columbus was still looking for the Mongols in 1492, since Europe had not received word of their fall over a century after its occurrence. However, in the 1500's, the Portuguese and then the Spanish arrived in China by sea. Most of China's contact with the West at this time was through the Jesuits who skillfully presented Christianity in Confucian terms in order to gain entrance into China and win converts to their faith. Ironically, the Jesuit leader, Matteo Ricci, won court favor by presenting the emperor with a wind-up clock, which, of course, was ultimately derived from the Chinese water clock. (He kept in their good graces by keeping the key, so he would be summoned to court each week to rewind the clock.) Over time, the Jesuits provided the Chinese with a good idea of the state of Western science and technology, especially in the areas of mathematics, cartography, astronomy, and artillery. Europe learned a great deal from China as well, such as the idea for its first suspension bridge, built in Austria in 1741, over 1000 years after the first such bridge had been built in China.

Extensive maritime expeditions into Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and as far as East Africa and Arabia, were another feature of the early Ming period. Between 1405 and 1433, no less than seven major expeditions were launched under the command of the admiral, Zheng He (1371-c.1434). Some of Zheng He's expeditions comprised over 25,000 men sailing in ships that were 400 feet long, many times larger than anything Europe, just then embarking on its age of exploration, could put into the water. The purpose of these expeditions is not entirely clear, probably being more to display Chinese power and influence than cultivate trade, although profitable trade was certainly carried on, especially in fine porcelain, which we today still call china. Then, in 1433, the expeditions suddenly ended, once again for vague reasons. One idea is that the mandarins, resentful of the profits made by the middle class merchants running these expeditions, pressured the emperor to end them. Whatever the reasons, it is tantalizing to think of what might have happened if these expeditions had continued, possibly with

China discovering a route to Europe. As it was, Europe was left to find those routes and eventually dominate the globe.

The end of these expeditions had other far-reaching results for China, since they deprived the government of vital trade revenues. This, combined with two other factors, led to the decline and fall of the Ming Dynasty. First of all, the later Ming emperors lost interest in government, retreating to the comfort and pleasures of the Forbidden City and allowing abuses and corruption to multiply in the provinces. At the same time, the practice of making military offices hereditary led to the gradual deterioration of the army. Together, these factors weakened China and encouraged a growing number of peasant rebellions, attacks by nomads in the North, and raids from pirates in Japanese and Chinese ports. In 1644, another northern people, the Manzhou from Manchuria, replaced the Ming Dynasty and founded a foreign, and China's last, dynasty.

## **The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)**

The Qing Dynasty founded by the Manzhou, although of nomadic origin, had absorbed much of Chinese culture and did everything it could to portray itself as a legitimately Chinese dynasty. As a result, the emperors revived the civil service exams and other governmental institutions, restored the mandarins to the levels of prestige they had enjoyed before Mongol rule, and maintained interest in classical scholarship. (However, the Manzhou also outlawed the crippling practice of binding Chinese women's feet and forced the Chinese peasants to shave their heads except for wearing Manchurian-style pigtails.) Militarily, the Manzhou extended China's borders to their greatest extent ever, encompassing Manchuria, Mongolia, Siankiang, Tibet, Korea, Burma, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

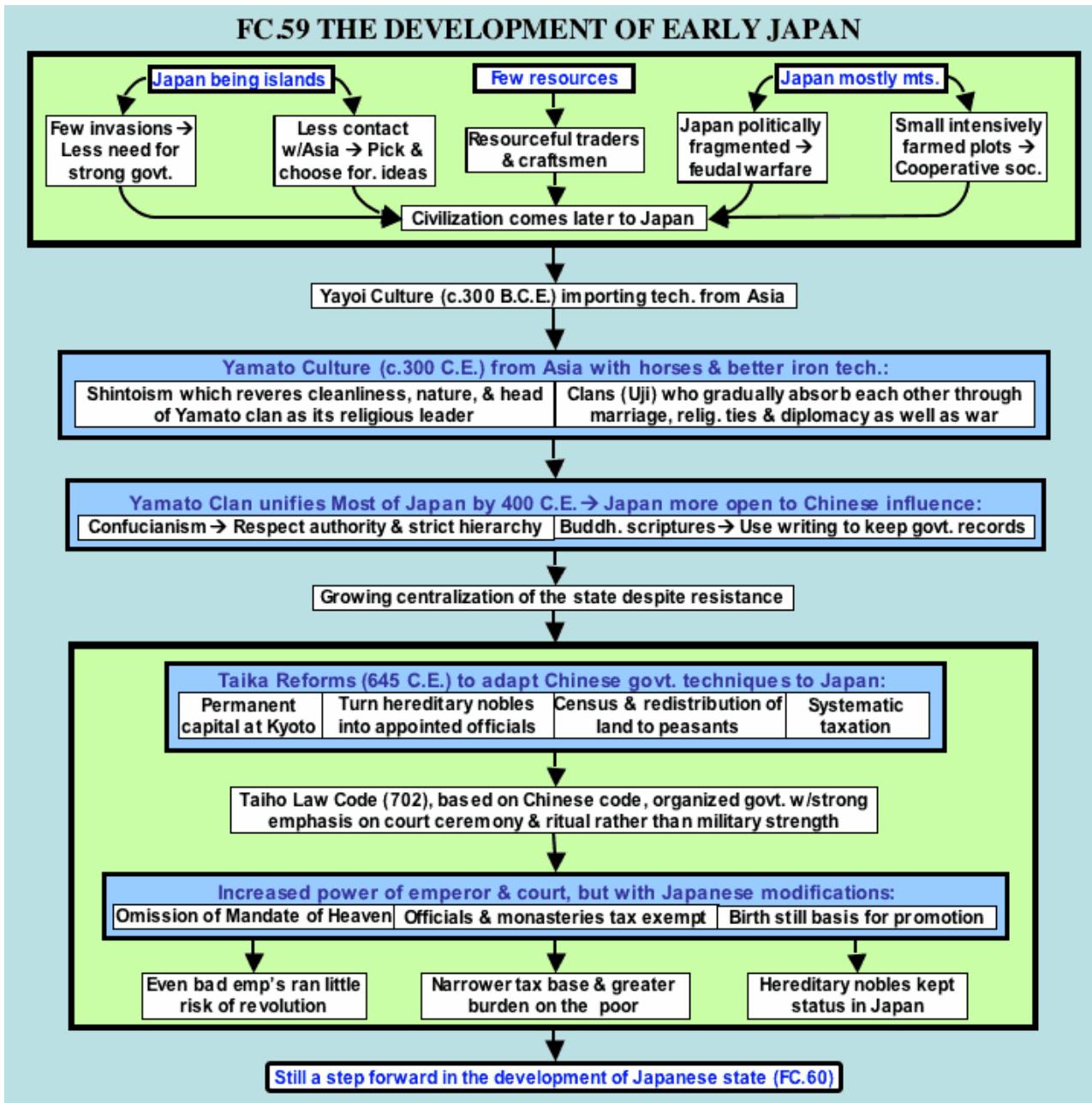
All this time, contact with the West continued. However, in the long run, it caused problems for China in two very different ways. For one thing, several new crops, such as corn, sweet potatoes, and better strains of rice, were imported, thus making China's agriculture much more productive. In the short run this was good. But, in the long run, these new crops and improved transport of food along China's canals and waterways, both of which allowed specialized cash crops suited to local soils, triggered a population explosion that pushed China's population to nearly 400,000,000 by 1800. At the same time, China's agriculture was expanding into Manchuria, which held the upland and drainage areas of some of China's rivers. Extensive farming here caused soil erosion and deforestation that triggered disastrous flooding downstream. These floods plus overpopulation put severe strains on China's ability to feed so many people and seriously weakened it.

The second problem had to do with religion. As we have seen, the Jesuits were allowed to preach Christianity in China, because they presented their religion in Confucian terms and were tolerant of Confucian practices. All that changed when Franciscan and Dominican priests arrived and started behaving in a much less tolerant manner than the Jesuits, condemning, among other things, the venerated Chinese custom of ancestor worship. Also, unlike the Jesuits, who concentrated on the educated ruling classes, the Franciscans and Dominicans preached more to the masses, which made Chinese authorities suspicious and resulted in a crackdown on Christianity in China (although the Jesuits still maintained some status at court) and a curtailment of trade with the West in the 1700's.

Unfortunately for China, Europe's power and interest in Chinese goods, especially tea, were growing beyond China's ability to hold these western "barbarians" back from its gates. The result would be a century of humiliation at the hands of the West and a revolution that would at once transform China and maintain its unique culture and integrity as a nation.

## **The Rise of Japanese Civilization Unit 9: The Rise of Japanese Civilization**

### **FC59The development of early Japan to c.700 CE**



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## Introduction: the geographic element

Certainly one of the most vibrant and influential cultures in the later twentieth century has been Japan. Despite the fact that it is mountainous, small (being roughly 2 percent the size of the United States) and has few natural resources, Japan is still one of the most productive industrial nations in the world. At first glance, Japan seems to be a mirror image of Great Britain, since both are small island nations just off the coasts of Eurasia. Indeed similarities do exist, such as the relatively independent existence each island nation has maintained in relationship to the respective continental cultures with which they are most in contact. However, significant differences also exist between the two cultures.

Three main geographic factors have influenced the history of Japan. First of all, Japan is an island nation consisting of four main islands (Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu) and thousands of islands that reach nearly to Taiwan. Japan's closest point to Korea on the mainland is still 115 miles away, some five times the

distance between Britain and France. This relative isolation has had two main results. For one thing, it has led to fewer invasions of Japan, thus creating less need for a strong central government. It has also let Japan pick and choose the influences it has taken from other cultures, in particular China, since it is close enough to the continent to absorb foreign influences, but isolated enough to be able to reject the aspects it does not want. One of the most striking characteristics of Japanese culture has been its ability to blend select elements of foreign cultures with its own native innovations to create something uniquely Japanese.

The second important aspect of Japan's geography is its mountains, which cover 72 percent of the land. This has led to some political fragmentation throughout much of Japan's history, although its extensive coastline helps tie Japan together through communication by sea. The mountainous landscape has also severely restricted the amount of available farmland, forcing Japanese peasants to intensively cultivate what little land is available. This has led to both a crowded and necessarily cooperative society that values the group, loyalty, and obedience to authority over the rights of the individual. The introduction of Confucianism after 400 C.E., with its emphasis on strictly defined social roles, further reinforced this trend.

Finally, except for forests, which cover 55 percent of its land, Japan is poor in natural resources. This has forced its people to be resourceful traders and manufacturers, especially since the late 1800's when the Industrial Revolution vastly increased Japan's dependence on outside resources. Overall, Japan's geography, in particular its isolation, caused civilization to come considerably later than it did elsewhere for many of the high civilizations of Eurasia.

## **Early elements of Japanese culture**

Early Japan seems to have had a number of different peoples migrating to its shores and influencing its early culture. Among the earliest were the Ainu, a Caucasian people quite distinct from the Mongolian stock that most Japanese are descended from. Some 17,000 Ainu still inhabit the northern island of Hokkaido. However, the primary influences on Japan's early culture were of Mongolian stock. From about 250 B.C.E. to 300 C.E., a culture from Asia known as Yayoi predominated, introducing rice agriculture, iron and bronze technology, and weaving. Yayoi society seems to have been matriarchal, with women holding high positions as priestesses or shamans. Only much later in Japanese history would women be reduced to a more subservient role in society.

By the third century C.E., cultural influences probably introduced from Korea, in particular better iron weapons and fighting from horseback, led to the Yamato period of Japanese culture (c.300-710). At first, the country was divided between numerous warring clans, known as *Uji*, each with its own patriarchal chief and guardian deity. Gradually, the Yamato clan unified most of Japan under its rule, claiming divine descent from the sun goddess Amaterasu. The imperial family in Japan today still traces its lineage back through the Yamato clan in the fourth century. Since there was no real distinction between governmental and religious functions in early Japan, the imperial family's duties have always been largely concerned with religious ritual. The burden of these ritualistic duties would hinder the emperors in the exercise of real political power so much in later centuries that they would often abdicate their thrones to their sons so they could be free to rule.

The emperors were especially concerned with their duties in Shinto, a uniquely Japanese religion that was emerging at this time. Shinto, which means "Way of the Gods" and is still popular in Japan, concerns itself with reverence for the forces of nature, which affect Japan so profoundly (e.g., typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanoes). It has no written texts or organization, being centered on shrines to local deities, known as *kami*. Worship is simple, consisting mainly of clapping (to get the *kami*'s attention), bowing, and possibly making offerings. Shinto largely focuses on ritual purification to remove impurity caused by contact with physical dirtiness, sex, childbirth, wounds, and death. The modern Japanese insistence on baths and cleanliness probably derives from this aspect of Shinto. The most important Shinto shrine at Ise is sacred to the sun goddess and has helped provide a national focus of loyalty to the imperial family associated with that deity.

## **Growing Chinese influence**

By the fifth century C.E., the growing power and sophistication of the Japanese state was making Japanese society more open to the influence of Chinese culture coming in by way of Korea. (A list compiled in 815 C.E. showed that more than one-third of Japan's aristocratic families claimed ancestry from Korea or China by way of Chinese colonies in Korea.) In addition, two other factors fed into this influence. For one thing, the Uji system of individual local clans was inadequate for meeting the growing needs of the state, oftentimes challenging or disrupting its authority. Secondly, the T'ang dynasty, which took power in 618, was taking China to new heights of power and influence that were being felt especially in Japan.

Two of the most important influences from China were Buddhism and Confucianism. In 552, the Korean state of Paekche presented scriptures and an image of Buddha to the Yamato court. Despite initial resistance by Japanese nobles, the Soga clan, which then effectively controlled the emperor and government, won Buddhism's acceptance. An important side effect of the introduction of Buddhism was the introduction of Chinese writing to Japan. This led many Japanese scholars to study in China where they would pick up other aspects of Chinese civilization and bring them back home. Thus Buddhism served as a vehicle for spreading Chinese civilization in much the same way that Christianity spread Mediterranean civilization to North Europe.

Confucianism brought two important elements to Japanese culture. First of all, its stress on a strict hierarchy of relationships reinforced the already cooperative nature of Japanese society as well as the autocratic social and political order that would emerge. Second, the Confucian emphasis on merit and education as the means of advancing in government would have some effect on Japanese values. However, this concept of advancement by merit would meet with stiff resistance from the hereditary Japanese nobility.

In the early 600's, Chinese, in particular Confucian, influence, sparked a number of governmental reforms. First of all, in 603 and 604, Prince Shotoku advocated the Chinese concepts of a supreme ruler, a centralized bureaucracy, advancement through merit, and the Confucian virtues. He tried to accomplish this by creating a system of court ranks that would replace the hereditary Uji ranks as the major basis for status. Prince Shotoku also sent several large embassies to China whose main importance was to bring back even more Chinese culture, which further accelerated the process of Japan's cultural transformation.

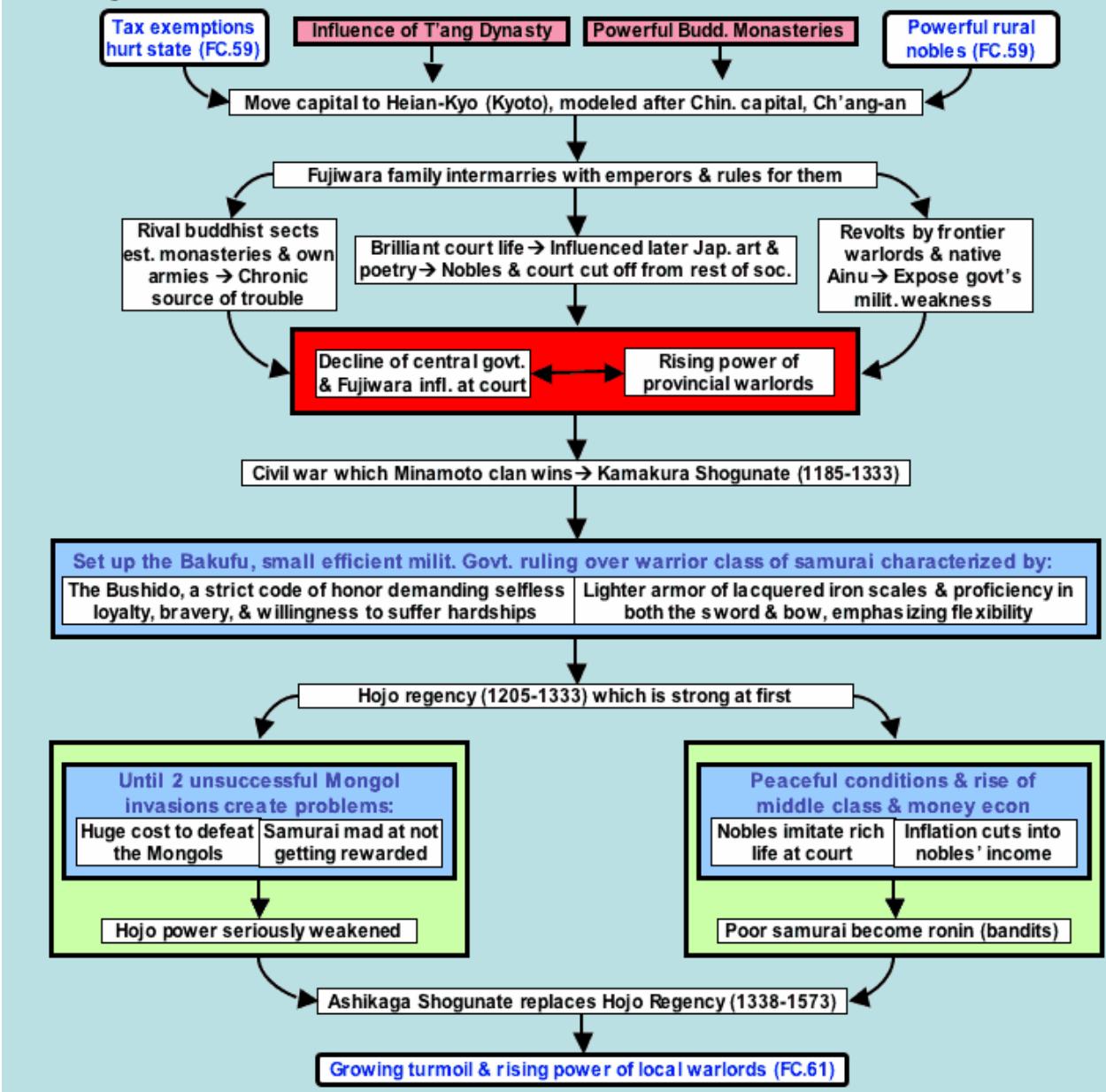
## The Taika reforms and rise of the Japanese state

By 700 C.E., the central government was ready for the next step in consolidating its power: the Taika ("great change"). This set of reforms tried to apply Chinese governing techniques and institutions to Japan in several ways: the establishment of central government ministries, provincial government, law codes, and a taxation system modeled after that of T'ang China. Central to these reforms was a census to redistribute lands to the peasants, although the emperor in theory owned all these lands and parceled them out among his loyal followers. In 702, these reforms were formalized in the Taiho law codes. At the same time, the government established its first permanent capital at Nara, which was modeled after the Chinese capital, Ch'ang-an, being laid out in a rectangular grid along a north-south axis.

The Taika reforms and Taiho law codes increased the power of the emperor and court, but with some typically Japanese modifications. For one thing, the Japanese never adopted the Chinese doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, which justified revolution against corrupt rulers. Therefore, the same dynasty of emperors has kept the throne in Japan throughout its history however unqualified some of them may have been. Second, resistance by the hereditary Japanese nobles against the Confucian system of promotion by means of an examination system meant that birth, not merit, remained the main criteria for government office. Finally, since dues to an overlord were cheaper than taxes to the central government, many peasants commended their lands to monasteries and powerful court nobles whose lands were tax exempt. This created a narrower tax base for the government and a greater tax burden on the peasants who kept their lands. Despite these limitations, the Taiko reforms and Taiho law codes were still a major step forward in the development of the Japanese state.

## FC60Japan's Heian & Samurai eras (c.700-1338)

## FC.60 JAPAN FROM THE HEIANKYO PERIOD TO THE RISE OF THE SAMURAI



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"There are three things which I cannot control, the fall of the dice, the flow of the River Kamo, and the turbulent monks of Mount Hiei." — Emperor Go-Shirakawa

### Heiankyo and Japanese court society (794-1184)

By the eighth century, the Japanese state had developed to the point of establishing a permanent capital at Nara. Unfortunately, at the same time, the power of the Buddhist monasteries was getting out of control. One Nara temple alone possessed forty-six manors and 5000 acres of excellent farmland, all of it tax-free. As we have seen, peasants often commended their lands to the monasteries in order to avoid government taxes. When a Buddhist monk, Dokyo, exercised undue influence over the empress Koken, this triggered a reaction against women running the government that reduced their overall status in society. It also caused the next emperor, Kammu, to move the capital away from the monasteries. Following the example of the Tang dynasty then at the peak of its power in China, he founded a new capital at Heiankyo, meaning "Capital of Eternal Tranquility". The new city, modeled

after the T'ang Chinese capital, Ch'ang-an, but on a smaller scale, was laid out in a rectangular grid facing South with the palace at the north end.

Since Japan was isolated and faced no foreign invasions at this time, Heiankyo had few fortifications and was little concerned with military affairs. It was able to maintain control over most of Japan through peaceful means. However, thanks to the non-military character of the government, two elements of Japanese society were creating problems that eventually would weaken Heiankyo's control. First of all, the power and rivalries of the different Buddhist monasteries often got out of control. These monasteries went so far as to form their own armies that fought each other and disrupted the public peace. Another source of trouble came from the Ainu on the frontiers. Japanese settlers and nobles claiming new lands had to spend much of their time fighting these primeval inhabitants. As a result, these frontier settlers became both tough fighters (ancestors of the Samurai) and increasingly independent.

For the time being, however, a powerful landed family, the Fujiwara, was able to maintain effective control over both the countryside and the emperors, through whom they ruled. They used the power that came from their extensive landed estates and exercised a skillful diplomacy of playing one faction off against another to control the nobles in the countryside. Their influence over the emperors and the government came from their ability to marry their daughters into the imperial family. By this time, the emperors were also so burdened by their ritual duties that it was increasingly difficult for them to exercise real power. Thus the custom of indirect rule, a dominant feature of Japanese history, became firmly entrenched during several centuries of Fujiwara influence.

Thanks to the peace and security provided by the Fujiwara, a handful of idle nobles in Heiankyo were able to participate in the brilliant, if somewhat artificial and inbred, culture that court life offered. Much like the French nobles at Louis XIV's court at Versailles, these nobles engaged in activities where manners, taste, and fashion counted for more in gaining status than did accomplishing anything more substantial. Careers rose and fell on the basis of the choice of colors for clothes and stationary or the proper phrasing in a poem. Long hair, blackened teeth, and eyebrows that were shaved and repainted higher on the forehead were the marks of beauty for women. A continuous round of love affairs, cuckoo viewing expeditions, and winding water banquets, where men would drink from floating cups of wine and then compose poems, occupied their time.

Our best source for getting the flavor of this court life comes from the pen of a woman, Lady Murasaki, who wrote one of the greatest works of Japanese literature, *The Tale of Genji*, whose title character spends his life in search of true love. Interestingly, women at court tended to write the best literature since, unlike men who had to concern themselves with the precise calligraphy of the difficult Chinese writing system, they could use the more phonetic Kana script. As artificial as much of court life at Heiankyo may have been, it did have a profound effect on later Japanese tastes in such things as art and poetry.

Whatever the later influences of this court culture, it also had several factors working against its continued existence. For one thing, it was cut off from the realities of mainstream society and its powerbase in the countryside. Also, the Taika reforms and Taiho Law Code were meeting with growing resistance from both nobles and peasants. Along these lines, the peasants' practice of commending their lands to local nobles and monasteries to avoid government taxes seriously cut into government revenues. As a result, the central government's power and the influence of the Fujiwara family declined. This led to the rising power of the provincial warlords, which further accelerated the decline of the government, and so on. The resulting turmoil triggered a civil war between the two most powerful noble clans, the Taira and Minamoto, both of whom were originally minor offshoots of the imperial family who had gone to the provinces to make their fortunes. In the end, the Minamoto, who had the backing of the shadowy emperors in Heiankyo, won the civil war and the title of *Seii-tai-shogun*, meaning "barbarian suppressing generalissimo". The shortened version of this title, *shogun*, would be the one that most effective rulers of Japan would carry until 1868, ruling indirectly through the emperors who still carried on as ceremonial figureheads.

## **The Kamakura Shogunate and rise of the samurai (1185-1333)**

As the term shogun suggests, the Kamakura Shogunate that the Minamoto established was in essence a form of military rule. This contrasted sharply with the highly cultured but non-military regime that preceded it in

Heiankyo, and was referred to as the *bakufu* ("tent government"), to reflect this military nature. Gradually, the shoguns replaced the formal government centered in Heiankyo with a strongly run feudal administration that rewarded their followers with income from estates and offices in the provinces. In 1221, a retired emperor who was resentful of this erosion of the central government's power rebelled in what was known as the Shokyu War. He was easily defeated, which allowed the shoguns to extend their feudal government all across Japan.

Feudal rule in Japan was very similar to its counterpart in Western Europe at the time. This was especially true of the warrior class that served as the backbone of the feudal order, known as the *bushi* ("warriors") or *samurai* ("those who serve"). Much like the European knights who were descended mainly from the Germanic invaders who had overthrown the Roman Empire, the samurai were largely descendants of the old provincial uji aristocracy, each group inheriting its military traditions from its respective ancestors. Both groups were an elite aristocracy, since the arms and armor needed to fight were too expensive for most people. Both groups also fought primarily from horseback in a series of individual encounters that often required the exchange of courtesies that befitted warriors of an elite class. Opposing samurai would greet each other with their respective genealogies to ensure they had worthy opponents, compliment their defeated opponents' courage afterwards, and even burn incense in their helmets so their heads would smell good if they were decapitated, a common practice in samurai combat, largely for the purpose of proving one's victory.

The Samurai code of honor, later known as the *Bushido* ("Way of the Warrior"), demanded selfless loyalty to one's lord. Much like in Western Europe, the lord-vassal relationship was a reciprocal one, where the lord gave his vassal protection and income from land or an office in return for lifelong service. However, in times of turmoil when the law of the jungle prevailed, many samurai would quickly change loyalties according to the shifting fortunes of war and politics. Samurai were also expected to display unflinching bravery in combat and bear incredible hardships without so much as complaining. Even to feel pain and hunger, let alone show or express it was considered a dishonor. Such values tended to breed a certain callousness for human suffering and disregard for human life which later shocked Westerners first coming into contact with Japan.

Many of the same virtues were expected of samurai women, who were taught to repress their feelings, ignore suffering, loyally serve their husbands, and in some cases to handle weapons. Women handled household affairs, including money, which was considered beneath a warrior's dignity. Even today, Japanese women typically handle family finances, probably deriving from this custom. At first, a samurai woman could inherit her husband's property and take charge of her family affairs and deceased husbands' duties to his lord. But, as time went on and warfare became more chronic, women's property rights declined and they found themselves condemned to an increasingly inferior position in society.

Japanese arms, armor, and techniques of combat were quite different from their counterparts in Western Europe. Instead of using the lance as their primary weapon, as European knights did, the samurai relied primarily on the bow and splendid curved swords, probably the finest crafted blades anywhere. As a result, the samurai's sword became the material focus of his honor, and a whole tradition and mythology grew up around both Japanese sword making and their swords. In contrast to the heavy plate armor which evolved in Western Europe, samurai armor was made up of thin strips of steel held together by brightly colored threads, making it much lighter and more flexible, while still providing a good deal of protection.

The strong rule established by Minamoto Yoritomo continued under his widow, Masa-ko, and her father, Hojo Tokimasa (1138-1215). Afterwards, the Hojo clan established a regency (1205-1333) that controlled the shoguns who in turn were supposedly running Japan in the name of the emperors. The Hojo Regency ruled Japan with a firm and somewhat just hand. In 1232, it established a guideline for jurists known as the Joei Code. Magistrates were expected to find and carefully weigh evidence in trials. (If that failed, they would then look for some evil omens, such as nosebleeds, choking, or being wet by a crow or a kite to determine the case.) Society was divided into three classes (samurai, commoners, and slaves), but did not always give the upper classes better treatment. Women's status was also relatively high. They inherited land, administered offices, and even led troops into battle. One of them, Masa-ko who was Minamoto Yoritomo's widow, was a power behind the throne after her husband's death.

The Hojo Regency saw two problems arise that would bring about their eventual fall. First of all, the peace and prosperity it brought encouraged the rise of a middle class. Although the samurai looked with disdain upon people

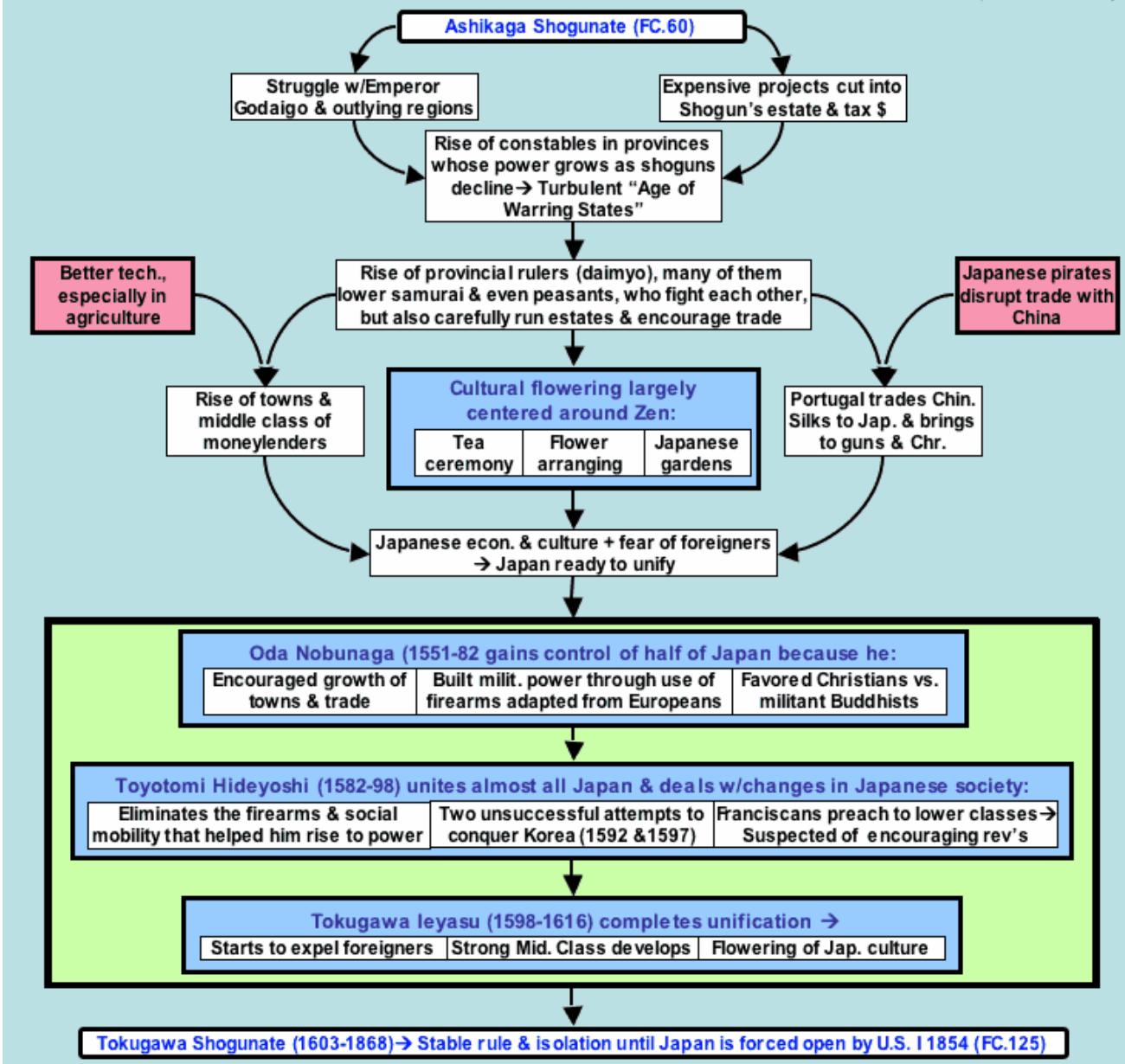
so concerned with money, prosperous times did influence them to imitate the more elegant and expensive lifestyles carried on at court. At the same time, the rising money economy triggered rising prices. As in Western Europe, this inflation hurt the samurai, especially the poorer ones who were on fixed incomes from lands and offices and were also not very good at handling money. As a result, many of the lower ranks of samurai found themselves in difficulties, some of them becoming unattached and footloose bandit samurai known as *ronin* who would add to Japan's troubles in the future.

The second problem came in 1274 when the Mongol ruler of China, Kublai Khan, launched his first invasion of Japan. Although this was driven back by a typhoon, the Mongols returned in 1281 with a much larger force of some 140,000 men. Despite the Mongols' numbers and use of such weapons as catapults that fired explosive projectiles, the samurai fought furiously to repel the invaders. However, once again, it was the force of nature in the form of a typhoon that decided the issue by wrecking much of the Mongol fleet and saving Japan. The Japanese called these typhoons *kamikaze* ("divine winds"), feeling that Japan was specially protected by the gods. The Mongol invasions forced the Japanese to band together as never before in the common defense of their nation.

However, the cost of driving out the Mongols had been a tremendous burden for the Hojo government. It also led many samurai to expect rewards from the government for their efforts. Unfortunately, since the Hojos had gained no new lands or plunder from these wars and could not meet samurai expectations of rewards, they lost many of their followers' support. Therefore, because of both economic strains and dissatisfaction among many samurai, the Hojo Regency and Kamakura Shogunate gave way to the weak rule of the Ashikaga Shogunate (1338-1573). The government's weakness allowed local lords, known as *daimyo*, to assert their independence. Eventually, Japan was split into some 60 virtually independent states whose daimyos disrupted the public peace with their private wars.

## **FC61Civil war & reunification by the Tokugawa dynasty (1338-1639)**

## FC.61 JAPAN FROM THE ASHIKAGA TO TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATES (1338-1639)



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## The breakdown of centralized rule and rise of the Daimyo

The Ashikaga shoguns who took over in 1338 found themselves faced with many of the same problems that had led to the downfall of their Hojo predecessors, namely resistance from outlying regions of Japan and continuing turmoil caused by bandit samurai (ronin). In addition, two other things weakened the Ashikaga government. First of all, the emperor Godaigo, rather than remaining a shadowy figurehead, challenged the Ashikagas for power. Although he was defeated, his revolt further weakened the shoguns. Secondly, the Ashikagas engaged in expensive building projects that cut into their already diminishing tax and estate revenues. As a result, many constables, the shoguns' officials in the provinces, started assuming more power locally, further weakening the central government.

This triggered revolts and the assassination of the shogun in 1441. A regency of four competing houses followed, which only led to more feuding and the Onin War (1467-77). Although a settlement was patched up, the damage

was already done, and a period known as the Age of Warring States ensued, dominated by new provincial warlords known as *daimyo*. The turmoil of the age created a good deal of social upheaval, which allowed many ambitious men of lower class origins to rise to positions of power. (Among these would be Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a peasant who would eventually unify Japan under his rule.) Contributing to the era's social mobility was the introduction of European muskets in 1542. This created a greater reliance on peasants for the daimyos' armies, some of which had three peasants in the ranks for every samurai. Another impact of the age's upheaval was declining status for women. This was largely the result of wider enforcement of primogeniture in order to prevent the splitting of family estates in these dangerous times. Therefore, women lost most of their property rights and became little more than pawns in the power politics of the day.

The roughly 142 daimyo who controlled Japan at this time were virtually independent rulers who fought each other viciously for survival and power. For about a century, rival daimyos plundered towns, devastated the countryside, and massacred innocent civilians. However, many or most daimyo also saw that a healthy society was essential to their power. Therefore, they closely supervised their estates and encouraged economic improvements, especially through public works such as irrigation projects. This helped create more settled conditions, which had three major results. First of all, much like in Western Europe, the more settled conditions along with improvements in agriculture, led to the rise of towns. These generally started as markets under the protection of the daimyo's castle walls and then grew into full-fledged towns with a middle class of moneylenders using both cash and credit.

Second, the more settled conditions and a desire for trade combined with a growing problem with Japanese pirates, known as wako, combined to make Japan more open to trade and relations with Portuguese explorers who were then first entering East Asian waters. This was because wako raids on the mainland had caused the Ming dynasty in China to cut trade relations with Japan. The Japanese, who were especially anxious to get silk from China, saw the Portuguese, who could trade in China, as useful middlemen to that end. In addition to trade, two other very different things came into Japan with the Portuguese. One was the manufacture and use of firearms in warfare, which spread rapidly across Japan. The other influence was Christianity, which was spread by Jesuit missionaries who displayed great self discipline and concentrated on the upper classes, both of which features the Japanese samurai liked. As a result, many samurai and even daimyos converted to Christianity. Both firearms and Christianity would later lead to growing stresses in Japanese society.

## Zen Buddhism

Another effect of the more settled conditions then prevailing was a cultural flowering in Japan. This largely centered on a new Buddhist sect known as Zen. Up to this point, the most popular form of Buddhism was Amida, or the Pure Land, sect. Unlike Theraveda Buddhism, whose members thought that it took personal effort to attain Nirvana, the extinction of the self which they felt was an illusion anyway, Amida Buddhism's followers saw Buddha and the Bodhisattva (other mortals who had gained enlightenment) as deities who would help them reach a paradise to the West. While this paradise was originally meant to be merely a sort of halfway spot where people could attain final enlightenment, many people saw it as an end in itself.

Amida Buddhism came to resemble Christianity in several ways. For one thing, it based salvation on God's grace. Second, it conceived of Buddha as something of a Trinity in the doctrine of the Three Buddhas: the body of Essence, who was the primordial Buddha pervading the universe, the Created Body, which was the historical Buddha much like Christ, and the Body of Bliss which takes the form of many Buddhas. The most important of these is Amida Buddha (Immeasurable Glory) who dwells in the Western paradise. Also, like Christianity, Amida Buddhism concerned itself with good works and charity. By the fifteenth century it was the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan, and it has kept that distinction to this day.

However, by this time another form of Buddhism, Zen, was becoming especially popular with the Samurai. Zen, which had reached Japan in the sixth century, emphasized reliance on one's own efforts rather than the grace of Buddha to attain enlightenment. As a result, it never achieved the popularity of Amida Buddhism. The basic idea of Zen is that there is an underlying unity tying everything together; but we are trapped in our daily perceptions by the illusion of a distinction between ourselves and the world around us. The goal of Zen is to be able to perceive the reality of that unity and extinguish our egos that create the illusion that separates us from all around us. This is not done through rational means, since rational thought is the product of minds that still perceive a subjective and

objective world where things are separate from one another. Rather, Zen strives for enlightenment (*satori*) through an intuitive grasp by means of meditation and concentration.

There are two primary techniques to this end. One is the *koan*, which from the rational point of view is an illogical riddle or theme that is meant to break the mind's customary thinking and "derail" it from its normal rational patterns of thought. The strain that the *koan* puts on the conscious mind should liberate the subconscious and break down the barriers between the two, thus leading to enlightenment. The second technique is *zazen*, a strict meditation using proper posture, breath, and concentration that stills the mind, controls the emotions, and strengthens the will. Unlike the *koan*, which through its "illogic" suddenly shakes one into enlightenment, *zazen* generally attains a more gradual enlightenment. However, *zazen* was more popular with the samurai, since its emphasis on discipline helped them develop their military skills, while its ideas on life and death (which in Zen are one and the same) helped them face death in battle with more resolve. Not surprisingly, such martial arts as swordsmanship and archery came to be closely associated with Zen, a far cry from Buddha's original intentions.

Zen, with its emphasis on harmony, purity, tranquility, and simplicity, had a profound impact on several aspects of Japanese culture during this time. One was the tea ceremony, which had also been imported from China several centuries earlier. This ritual, where one person served tea to another, took place in a simple hut and emphasized simplicity through the precise arrangement of objects and the equally precise motions in the ceremony itself. Ceramics and flower arranging, which were inherent parts of the tea ceremony, also became important aspects of Japanese culture at this time. Zen also influenced the development of Japanese gardens, and in particular rock gardens of raked gravel (to represent the tranquility of the sea) interspersed with larger rocks arranged in precise and asymmetrical patterns. The beauty and simplicity of these gardens were designed to help one in meditation.

## **The restoration of order and unity by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1551-98)**

Although these various cultural advances were not of a political nature, they did help provide Japan with a common culture that promoted the unity of Japan as a whole. At the same time, the rising towns and middle class along with the spread of firearms and Christianity were available for anyone with the daring and foresight to exploit them in the reunification of Japan. That person, Oda Nobunaga, came to power in a relatively obscure but strategically placed province of Owari in 1551. He and his successors, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Ieyasu Tokugawa, would restore unity and order to Japan.

Nobunaga was a cruel and ruthless tyrant who once had a maid executed for leaving a fruit stem on the floor. However, he was a skillful general and ruler who successfully exploited the forces of the day to his advantage. He was a leader among Japanese daimyo in adapting firearms to his army and using them to great effect. He also built his economy by building roads, abolishing tolls, and establishing open markets and a standard coinage. One other thing Nobunaga did was favor the Christians against the militant Buddhist monasteries that he especially disliked. Success bred success for Nobunaga, since each victory attracted more followers to his standard, which led to more victories and so on. By his death in 1582, Nobunaga controlled 32 of Japan's 66 provinces. It was left to his successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, to complete Japan's unification.

Hideyoshi was originally a peasant who had risen through the ranks to become one of Nobunaga's most trusted generals. Like Nobunaga, he was also a superior general, being both bold and resolute in action. Although not quite as cruel as his predecessor, he could still be ruthless as he avenged Nobunaga's death, eliminated any rival generals who might make a bid for power, and got Nobunaga's lands under his control. By 1590, Hideyoshi had unified all of Japan except for the lands of Ieyasu Tokugawa with whom he concluded a treaty that lasted until Hideyoshi's death in 1598. Hideyoshi declined to assume the title of shogun since he was not related by blood to the current line of shoguns.

Once Hideyoshi's power was established, he followed three policies that would profoundly affect Japan's future course of development. For one thing, he launched two invasions of Korea (1592 and 1597). Both of these failed, largely due to the Korean navy of armored "turtle" ships that cut the Japanese army in Korea off from its homeland and forced its retreat. Despite these defeats, one can see this as part of a greater expansion of the Japanese people,

going along with the spread of Japanese settlers, mercenaries, and pirates (wako) throughout East and Southeast Asia.

Secondly, despite his own peasant origins, Hideyoshi cracked down on society in an attempt to stifle the social mobility that had helped stir up so much turmoil over the past century. In an attempt to disarm the populace, Hideyoshi launched the Sword Hunt, confiscating all weapons, especially firearms, from non-nobles under the pretext of melting them down to make a statue of Buddha. He also prevented peasants, merchants, and samurai from changing their professions or even their overlords, thus creating a rigid social structure that lasted until the mid 1800's.

Hideyoshi's third policy concerned growing tensions with European Christians, whose ability to trade with China had greatly increased their influence in Japan. As we have seen, the Japanese liked the Jesuits whose self-discipline and habit of preaching mainly to the upper classes did little to disrupt the harmony of Japanese society. However, several things about Christianity disturbed many Japanese: their meat diet (since the Japanese were mainly vegetarian), their intolerance of other religions, their slave trade which took Japanese out of their country, and the question of who Japanese Christians were more loyal to, their own rulers or the Christian God. In 1587, after one of his vassals refused to renounce Christianity, Hideyoshi decreed all Christian missionaries should leave the country. However, the decree was not strictly enforced, and missionaries just kept a low profile as they did their work. Tensions increased in 1593 with the arrival of Spanish Franciscans who raised suspicions of trying to stir up rebellion by preaching to the lower classes. A dispute over ownership of a Spanish galleon shipwrecked off the coast of Japan in 1596 led to fears of a Spanish invasion and persecution of Japanese Christians.

Hideyoshi's death in 1598 led to a power struggle which ended with the new ruler, Ieyasu Tokugawa, establishing his power and even assuming the title of shogun. During this time, problems with the Christians were put on hold. However, in 1600, Dutch Protestants arrived who told stories about their Spanish enemies that revived Japanese fears of all foreigners. As a result, Tokugawa outlawed and persecuted Christians. His successors went even further, banning virtually all foreigners from Japan by 1639. Only two Dutch ships and a handful of Chinese and Korean ships could trade each year. For the next two centuries, Japan would cut itself off from the rest of the world and develop on its own.