

Tang and Song Dynasties in China

Time Period	Tang dynasty – A.D. 618-907; Song dynasty – A.D. 960-1279
Geographic Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vast land expanses of China include plateaus, plains, basins, foothills, and mountains The highest mountains are located in the west (Himalayas) China has numerous rivers and lakes The Yangtze, the longest in China and even in Asia, is the third-longest in the world The Yellow River is just behind the Yangtze, both flowing into the Pacific Ocean Tang was larger in size than Song
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Tang monarchs fully restored the imperial bureaucracy, which the Confucian scholar-gentry continued to dominate; brought back civil service exam from the Han; considered a Confucian Renaissance The role of aristocratic families within the government was still present; some did not have to take CST Although the examination procedure offered a chance for any man to enter the imperial bureaucracy, many obtained positions as a result of birth or family connections Anti-Buddhist Backlash in the 800s <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Song government, the scholar-gentry carefully restrained military growth to prevent internal uprisings, but perhaps weakening the military allowing for a decline in strength leading to decline Song rulers promoted the interests of the Confucian bureaucracy; quite elaborate and expensive The examination system was further regularized The Song empire never matched the Tang dynasty in terms of extent of land controlled or military power
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expansion of commerce was accompanied by substantial urban growth under the Tang and Song dynasties aided by the construction of the Grand Canal under the Sui Tang conquests on the western frontier opened up trade routes and helped to establish connections between the civilized cores of Eurasia; Silk Road secured during Tang Commercial shipping improved as the pace of trade quickened Chinese junks were perhaps the finest commercial vessels in the world at this time Market quarters in Chinese cities grew larger (these markets were organized by local guilds, but subject to imperial control); merchants had low status Exchanges involving money and credit became common The government began the introduction of paper money in the eleventh century during the Tang Population growth and the increased pace of trade served to stimulate urban growth in – home to largest populated cities in the world Improvements in agricultural technique, in addition to increased acreage, promoted higher yields Song chose to specialize in Silk, cotton and porcelain manufacturing (kilns operated constantly which allowed finished porcelain to be stored in warehouses waiting for export)
Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revival of Confucianism under the Tang threatened the position of Buddhism in China, which had flourished during the Era of Division (period of the six dynasties between the Han and Sui-400yrs) By the middle of the ninth century, in part as a result of early Tang support, there were nearly 50,000 Buddhist monasteries in China Both Daoists and Confucians attacked Buddhism as an alien importation into China, saying it was a threat to China's economy By the ninth century(Tang decline), emperors began to take steps to halt the growth of Buddhism; Buddhist monasteries were attacked and lands were recovered which marked the slowing of Buddhist expansion in China, although it survived as a major aspect of Chinese culture Confucianism was restored to its central position within Chinese intellectual and religious life which brought forth Neo-Confucianism
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social pyramid: Monarch→Gentry and scholar gentry →Farmers and artisans→ Peasants → Merchants Although many merchants became very rich, they had very low status because they earn money from other people's work; anti-Confucian; considered parasites Confucian patterns of the ideal household became more prominent in the Tang-Song era Extended households were only common among the elite like primary and secondary wife along with Concubines Male-dominated domestic hierarchies; patriarchal The position of women improved in the early Tang period, but steadily declined thereafter with Song introduction of footbinding Marriages were often the result of careful negotiations between families Women were excluded from the education system, and thus from public life (many elite influenced the court) The practice of footbinding effectively secluded women by literally removing their physical mobility and became typical of upper classes

Intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the patronage of the Tang and Song emperors, the numbers of scholar-gentry exceeded those of the Han era • The Ministry of Rites administered increasingly regularized examinations to students from government schools or respected teachers and those who passed the most difficult exams were given opportunity to achieve high office • Success in the examination procedure granted higher social status to the candidates • Under the scholar-gentry, Confucianism was revived and neo-Confucianism gained a wide following • Major technological innovations and scientific discoveries were common in the Tang-Song era • Engineering feats included the construction of the vital canal system, dikes, dams, and bridges; all were critical to the commercial expansion and population movement typical of the period • Gunpowder was developed at first for amusement, then for military use • Chairs, tea-drinking, coal for fuel, and kites became common in Chinese households • Under the Song, compasses were applied to sea navigation • The abacus was used for calculations, much as a modern computer • Movable type was invented (block printing), making the production of books easier.
Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the literary and artistic accomplishment of the Tang- Song era was due to the revival of the Confucian scholar- gentry because the Confucian ideal required the educated man to appreciate the arts and to participate in their creation • The art and literature of the scholar-gentry concentrated on everyday life, rather than religious • Li Bo, the most famous poet of the Tang era, wrote his most effective works concerning the natural world • Under the Song, landscape painting reached its height in China • It was not unusual for paintings to be accompanied by poetry that complemented the subject matter
Decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tang decline began in the in the 800s century as a result of disruptions within the imperial family • Xuanzong's reign marked the beginning of Tang decline when he lost interest in governing and became infatuated with a concubine, Yang Guifei....interesting anecdote but not important • As central authority weakened, nomads on the frontiers gained control over large portions of China and generals were able to establish regional kingdoms <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military weakness on the frontiers led to external pressure on the Song empire • In the long run, military performance suffered, Jurchens invaded and the Mongols under Genghis caused the Song to pull back beneath the Yellow River • By 1279, the borders of the Song were drastically reduced and Kublai Khan's Mongol army were finally able to set up the Yuan dynasty after 35 years of fighting
Global Connections/ Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Tang dynasty, China had a very strong influence on many areas, but mainly Japan • Japanese modeled cities on Chinese ones, nobles adopted Chinese language, food, and style of dress, Chinese tea ceremony, music, dance, and gardens • Foreign trade expanded under both the Tang and Song dynasties, trading with India, Persia, and the Middle East; improved navigational equipment and Junks fostered this as well as commercial production • The Tang-Song Era coincided with the Islamic Civs of the Umayyad and the Abbasid making these two areas of the world the most sophisticated; Western Europe at this time moved from the early Middle Ages with very little advancement to the High Middle Ages with increasing development but no where near the height of the Islamic and Chinese Civs