

Dynasty



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Dynasty During the nearly seven hundred years from the Sui to the end of the Song, a mature political system based on principles originally established during the Qin and Han dynasties gradually emerged in China. After the Tang's dynasty's brief flirtation with Buddhism, State Confucianism became the ideological cement that held the system together. (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2009, p. 280)

1. The Sui dynasty (581-617)

In the year 577 AD, Yang Chien set up Sui Dynasty. By 581 AD, the entire southern states were also brought under its control and thus Imperial China was founded. The Sui dynasty came to an abrupt ending because of its expensive military expansions and political unrest due to its autocratic and tyrannical form of government.

Though principles of Confucius were respected and followed to some extent in state affairs but more emphasis was paid on Buddhism and Taoism.

Education system was over-hauled. Civil service exams were introduced a long time back during the Han dynasty and during this time period, this system was revived.

The economy of China improved due to developments and engineering works such as canals, roads and cities- which were undertaken on a large scale. Special attention was paid to irrigation and agriculture. The Grand Canal was built to promote speedy communication and transportation between the northern and the southern parts of China. The Great Wall of China was also fortified. 1

2. The Tang dynasty (618-907)

In 617, the Sui dynasty was overthrown by Tangs. It promoted Taoism in the religious and social lives of the people. The government was centralized and

it managed to rule for about 300 years. Major changes in the political, economical and social structures were witnessed during this time. Printing was invented and Art and literature flourished.

Arab, Persian and foreign traders expanded their activities during the eighth century and set up factories at the Canon Delta, Fu-chien and Chiang-su².

The government held large areas of land particularly for the breeding of horses for the government officials; and military-agricultural colonies were established along the northern border as a means to protect the frontier³.

The Tang dynasty managed to establish peace and stability in the empire and during 715-56 AD, prices were low and merchants could undertake long journeys without the fear of robbery. ⁴ Transport of luxury goods and grains from the southern parts of China was made easy with the intricate web of highways and the canal system. ⁵

This state of wealth and prosperity could not last longer because land holding policies of the government and the affluence of the wealthy began to out buy the poor. The government conferred gifts in the form of land to its favorite officials and influential persons. The law of ' equal land allotments' introduced in 624 AD by Tang rulers was not followed in the true spirit.

However, owning large areas of land promoted agriculture and the use of heavy machinery that yielded splendid crops. ⁶

Culture and arts flourished during this time period. Education, relaxation with courtesans, and marrying in influential and respectable families were considered as the greatest achievements of a person. " One of the most notable is the manner in which money defines all social ties." (Lewis, 2009, p. 104)

3. The Song dynasty (960-1279)

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This era is characterized by rise in neo Confucianism and decline of Buddhism. Bureaucracy extended to religious life. All religious practices needed to be state approved. Centralized bureaucracy was introduced that replaced regional military government.

Under the Sung dynasty, the development of cities began, not only for administrative purposes but also centers of trade, industry and maritime commerce... A new group or mercantile class arose as printing and education spread and private trade grew, the economy linking the coastal provinces with the interior. (Lane, 2008, p. 224)

Social status was characterized by education. Passing civil service examination could guarantee a government job. Thus, a scholarly class distinguished itself from the farmers, artisans, merchants, etc. on the basis of their education, mastery of literary culture, and the eligibility to serve for the civil bureaucracy that governed the Chinese Empire. 7

Thus the three dynasties in their own tenure transformed the face of Imperial China and contributed in its own way to the political, social and economical structures of its respective eras.

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