

Song dynasty

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The Song dynasty had played an important role in China throughout history. The Song dynasty consisted of Northern Song Dynasty from 960-1127 and the Southern Song Dynasty 1127-1279. It was a time of peace and prosperity. During the Song dynasty, there were many changes and advancement that people have never seen before in Chinese history. It was like a period of golden age where China went through a modern and urban development. China had a time of social and economic changes. Before the Song Dynasty, China was lacking while others were becoming more urban and westernize. However during the beginning of the Song Dynasty, China's military were at their weakest. The Song Dynasty was a period in which the Chinese government was very weak. Sung T'ai Tsu was the first emperor during the Song Dynasty. He was forced to become emperor in order to unify China. Sung T'ai Tsu created a national army under his direct control. He was the only one who was able to control the military. When Sung T'ai Tsu passed away, no one was able to keep the military that Sung T'ai Tsu created under control and therefore the military became weakened. China didn't have a strong military and therefore they focused on developing other aspects of the society. The developments during the Song Dynasty brought many changes and new cultures to China. Education became more popular which led to the growth of literature and arts. The government had enforced their civil service examination system in order to draft people into the military. During the Song Dynasty, there were changes in the scholarly elite. This includes scholar officials and everyone who held examination degree or candidates of the civil service examination. The elite would usually call themselves shi or shidafu, which is a term used since classical times to mean

scholar-gentleman and scholar-official. The examination system played a central role in the fashioning of these new elite. This was mainly because the Song dynasty was afraid and concerned of domination of the government by military men. The number of those passing the highest examinations soon averaged four to five times the number in Tang dynasty. Scholars needed to put greater effort into perfecting the examinations. Through this system, a large percentage of officialdom was recruited from families living in central and southern China. During this time, the Song scholar-officials and examination candidates were better educated and less aristocratic in their habits. Following the ideas of Confucianism, Song scholar-officials viewed themselves as highly high-minded figures whose responsibility was to keep greedy merchants and power-hungry military men in their place. Neo-Confucianism also became well known with Zhu Xi as one of the most influential philosophers. Neo-Confucianism is a modified version of Confucianism which incorporates values from other belief systems. During the twelfth century, Zhu Xi combined Confucianism with ideas from Buddhism and Taoism even though the Song dynasty argued that Buddhism offered little philosophy. Zhu Xi also created a series of works that became the code of behavior. The Song Dynasty witnessed agricultural and technological improvements. Agriculture plays a big role in China. Improvements in agriculture would improve the life and social interests of others. The growth of economic activities led to progresses in many fields of science and technology. These improvements in technologies led to more and better productions and outputs. Agriculture helped china because the agricultural output was used for the tax revenue of the state. The

government during the Song Dynasty encouraged people to buy and lands and put them under cultivation. People who opened up new lands and paid taxes to the government were granted permanent possession of the new land. Technology was one of the most beneficial improvements during the Song Dynasty. The advancement in weapons helped the Song dynasty hold off their enemies. During the war in 1040 with the Tanguts, the emperor announced the creations of a broad range of weapons and siege machines. This started the inventions of gunpowder which at the time was used for incendiary grenades delivered by catapults. Soon, military engineers discover that gunpowder had other great use and therefore they invented cannons. The most distinguished advancement during the Song Dynasty was introducing paper money. The Song Dynasty was the first government in history to issue paper money over gold and silver. The idea of paper money was because it is easier to carry around. The paper money had names and seals printed on it by the government. The government created government run factories in places like Hangzhou to print out paper money. This created more jobs for the people and also improved their economy. There were other advancements during the Song Dynasty that changed China into who they are today.