



### CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The Sui and Tang Empires, 581–755
- The Emergence of East Asia, to 1200
- New Kingdoms in East Asia and Southeast Asia
- Conclusion

**DIVERSITY + DOMINANCE** *Law and Society in China and Japan*

**ENVIRONMENT + TECHNOLOGY** *Writing in East Asia, 400–1200*



Fujita Art Museum

**Buddhism at a Distance** The Buddhist monk Xuanzang returns to the Tang capital Chang'an from Tibet in 645, his ponies laden with Sanskrit texts.



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# Inner and East Asia, 600–1200

The powerful and expansive Tang Empire (618–907) ended four centuries of rule by short-lived and competing states that had brought turmoil to China after the fall of the Han Empire in 220 C.E. (see Chapter 5). Tang rule also encouraged the spread of Buddhism, brought by missionaries from India and by Chinese pilgrims returning with sacred Sanskrit texts. The Tang left an indelible mark on the Chinese imagination long after it too fell.

According to surviving memoirs, people watched shadow plays and puppet shows, listened to music and scholarly lectures, or took in less edifying spectacles like wrestling and bear baiting in the urban entertainment quarters that flourished in southern China under the succeeding Song (**soong**) Empire. From the 1170s onward, singer-storytellers spun long romantic narratives that alternated prose passages with sung verse.

Master Tung's *Western Chamber Romance* stood out for its literary quality. In 184 prose passages and 5,263 lines of verse the narrator tells of a love affair between Chang, a young Confucian scholar, and Ying-ying, a ravishing damsel. Secondary characters include Ying-ying's shrewd and worldly mother, a general who practices just and efficient administration, and a fighting monk named Fa-ts'ung (**fa-soong**). The romance is based on *The Story of Ying-ying* by the Tang period author Yüan Chen (**you-ahn shen**) (779–831).

As the tale begins, the abbot of a Buddhist monastery responds to Chang's request to rent him a study, singing:

Sir, you're wrong to offer me rent.  
We Buddhists and Confucians are of one family.  
As things stand, I can't give you  
A place in our dormitory,  
But you're welcome to stay  
In one of the guest apartments.

As soon as Chang spies Ying-ying, who lives there with her mother, thoughts of studying flee his mind. Romance takes a detour, however, when bandits attack the monastery. A prose passage explains:

During the T'ang dynasty, troops were stationed in the P'u prefecture. The year of our story, the commander of the garrison, Marshal Hun, died. Because the second-in-command, Ting Wen-ya, did not have firm control of the troops, Flying Tiger Sun, a

- What is the importance of Inner and Central Asia as a region of interchange during the Tang period?
- What were the effects of the fracturing of power in Central Asia and China?
- How did East Asia develop between the fall of the Tang and 1200?
- To what extent do shared philosophies, technologies, and commercial contacts justify thinking of East Asia as a unified cultural region in the post-Tang era?

subordinate general, rebelled with five thousand soldiers. They pillaged and plundered the P'u area. How do I know this to be true? It is corroborated by *The Ballad of the True Story of Ying-ying*.

As the monks cower before the bandits, one of them lifts his robe to reveal his “three-foot consecrated sword.”

[Prose] Who was this monk? He was none other than Fa-ts'ung. Fa-ts'ung was a descendant of a tribesman from western Shensi. When he was young he took great pleasure in archery, fencing, hunting, and often sneaked into foreign states to steal. He was fierce and courageous. When his parents died, it suddenly became clear to him that the way of the world was frivolous and trivial, so he became a monk in the Temple of Universal Salvation. . . .

[Song] He didn't know how to read sutras;  
He didn't know how to follow rituals;  
He was neither pure nor chaste  
But indomitably courageous. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Amidst the love story, the ribaldry, and the derring-do, the author implants historical vignettes that mingle fact and fiction. Sophisticates of the Song era, living a life of ease, enjoyed these romanticized portrayals of Tang society.

## THE SUI AND TANG EMPIRES, 581–755

**Grand Canal** The 1,100-mile (1,771-kilometer) waterway linking the Yellow and the Yangzi Rivers. It was begun in the Han period and completed during the Sui Empire.

After the fall of the Han dynasty, China was fragmented for several centuries. It was reunified under the Sui (**sway**) dynasty, father and son rulers who held power from 581 until Turks from Inner Asia (the part of the Eurasian steppe east of the Pamir Mountains) defeated the son in 615. He was assassinated three years later, and the Tang filled the political vacuum.

The small kingdoms of northern China and Inner Asia that had come and gone during the centuries following the fall of the Han Empire had structured themselves around a variety of political ideas and institutions. Some favored the Chinese tradition, with an emperor, a bureaucracy using the Chinese language exclusively, and a Confucian state philosophy (see Chapter 5). Others reflected Tibetan, Turkic, or other regional cultures and depended on Buddhism to legitimate their rule. Throughout the period the relationship between northern China and the deserts and steppe of Inner Asia remained a central focus of political life, a key commercial linkage, and a source of new ideas and practices.

The Sui rulers called their new capital Chang'an (**chahng-ahn**) in honor of the old Han capital nearby in the Wei (**way**) River Valley (modern Shaanxi province). Though northern China constituted the Sui heartland, population centers along the Yangzi (**yahng-zeh**) River in the south grew steadily and pointed to what would be the future direction of Chinese expansion. To facilitate communication and trade with the south, the Sui built the 1,100-mile (1,771-kilometer) **Grand Canal** linking the Yellow River with the Yangzi, and they also constructed irrigation systems in the Yangzi Valley. On their northern frontier, the Sui also improved the Great Wall, the barrier against nomadic incursions that had been gradually constructed by several earlier states.

Sui military ambition, which extended to Korea and Vietnam as well as Inner Asia, required high levels of organization and mustering of resources—manpower, livestock, wood, iron, and food supplies. The same was true of their massive public works projects. These burdens proved more than the Sui could sustain. Overextension compounded the political dilemma stemming from the military defeat and subsequent assassination of the second Sui emperor. These circumstances opened the way for another strong leader to establish a new state.

In 618 the powerful Li family took advantage of Sui disorder to carve out an empire of similar scale and ambition. They adopted the dynastic name Tang (Map 10.1). The brilliant emperor **Li Shimin (lee shir-meen)** (r. 626–649) extended his power primarily westward into Inner Asia. Though he and succeeding rulers of the **Tang Empire** retained many Sui governing practices,



**AP\* Exam Tip** Be prepared to discuss the major economic and technological advances of Tang and Song China, such as the Grand Canal.

### Reunification of China Under Sui

**Li Shimin** One of the founders of the Tang Empire and its second emperor (r. 626–649). He led the expansion of the empire into Central Asia.

**Tang Empire** Empire unifying China and part of Central Asia, founded 618 and ended 907. The Tang emperors presided over a magnificent court at their capital, Chang'an.





	Inner Asia	China	Northeast Asia	Japan
<b>600</b>		581–618 Sui unification		
		618 Tang Empire founded		
<b>800</b>		626–649 Li Shimin reign		645–655 Taika era
		690–705 Wu Zhao reign	668 Silla victory in Korea	
	751 Battle of Talas River			710–784 Nara as capital
		755–763 An Lushan rebellion		752 “Eye-Opening” ceremony
<b>1000</b>				794 Heian era
		840 Suppression of Buddhism		
		879–881 Huang Chao rebellion		866–1180 Fujiwara influence
		907 End of Tang Empire	916 Liao Empire founded	
		960 Song Empire founded	918 Koryo founded	
<b>1200</b>				ca. 1000 <i>The Tale of Genji</i>
	1038–1227 Tanggut state on China’s northwest frontier		1115 Jin Empire founded	
		1127–1279 Southern Song period		1185 Kamakura Shogunate founded

### Li Shimin and Tang Empire

they avoided overcentralization by allowing local nobles, gentry, officials, and religious establishments to exercise significant power (see Diversity and Dominance: Law and Society in China and Japan).

The Tang emperors and nobility descended from the Turkic elites that built small states in northern China after the Han, as well as from Chinese officials and settlers who had moved there. They appreciated the pastoral nomadic culture of Inner Asia (see Chapter 7) as well as Chinese traditions. Some of the most impressive works of Tang art, for example, are large pottery figurines of the horses and two-humped camels used along the Silk Road, brilliantly colored with glazes devised by Chinese potters. In warfare, the Tang combined Chinese weapons—the crossbow and armored infantrymen—with Inner Asian expertise in horsemanship and the use of iron stirrups. At their peak, from about 650 to 751, when they were defeated in Central Asia (present-day Kyrgyzstan) by an Arab Muslim army at the Battle of Talas River, the Tang armies were a formidable force.



**AP\* Exam Tip** Understand reasons for the spread of major religions such as Buddhism, but don’t stress about memorizing the various sects of Buddhism.

### Buddhism and the Tang Empire

The Tang rulers followed Inner Asian precedents in their political use of Buddhism. State cults based on Buddhism had flourished in Inner Asia and north China since the fall of the Han. Some interpretations of Buddhist doctrine accorded kings and emperors the spiritual function of welding humankind into a harmonious Buddhist society. Protecting spirits were to help the ruler govern and prevent harm from coming to his people.

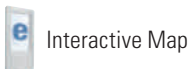
### Mahayana Sect

Mahayana (**mah-HAH-YAH-nah**), or “Great Vehicle,” Buddhism predominated. Mahayana fostered faith in enlightened beings—bodhisattvas—who postpone nirvana (see Chapter 6) to help others achieve enlightenment. This permitted the absorption of local gods and goddesses into Mahayana sainthood and thereby made conversion more attractive to the common people. Mahayana also encouraged translating Buddhist scripture into local languages, and it accepted religious practices not based on written texts. The tremendous reach of Mahayana views, which proved adaptable to different societies and classes of people, invigorated travel, language learning, and cultural exchange.

Early Tang princes competing for political influence enlisted monastic leaders to pray for them, preach on their behalf, counsel aristocrats to support them, and—perhaps most important—contribute monastic wealth to their war chests. In return, the monasteries received tax exemptions, land privileges, and gifts.

### Interregional Contacts

As the Tang Empire expanded westward, contacts with Central Asia and India increased, and so did the complexity of Buddhist influence throughout China. Chang’an, the Tang capital, became the center of a continent-wide system of communication. Central Asians, Tibetans, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Koreans regularly visited the capital and took away with them the most recent ideas and styles. Thus the Mahayana network connecting Inner Asia and China intersected a vigorous commercial world in which material goods and cultural influences mixed. Though Buddhism and Confucianism proved attractive to many different peoples, regional cultures and identities remained strong, just as regional commitments to Tibetan, Uighur (**WEE-ger**), and other languages and writing systems coexisted with the widespread use of written Chinese. Textiles reflected Persian, Korean, and Vietnamese styles, while influences from every



**MAP 10.1** The Tang Empire in Inner and Eastern Asia, 750 For over a century the Tang Empire controlled China and a very large part of Inner Asia. The defeat of Tang armies in 751 by a force of Arabs, Turks, and Tibetans at the Talas River in present-day Kyrgyzstan ended Tang westward expansion. To the south the Tang dominated Annam, and Japan and the Silla kingdom in Korea were leading tributary states of the Tang.





University of Pennsylvania Museum, image # 62844

**tributary system** A system in which, from the time of the Han Empire, countries in East and Southeast Asia not under the direct control of empires based in China nevertheless enrolled as tributary states, acknowledging the superiority of the emperors in China in exchange for trading rights or strategic alliances.

#### Tribute



#### PRIMARY SOURCE: Memorial on Bud-

**dhism** Find out what it is about the practice of Buddhism in China that causes Han Yu to report that he is “truly alarmed, truly afraid.”

#### Opposition to Buddhism

**Iron Stirrups** This bas-relief from the tomb of Li Shimin depicts the type of horse on which the Tang armies conquered China and Inner Asia. Saddles with high supports in front and back, breastplates, and cruppers (straps beneath the tail that help keep the saddle in place) point to the importance of high speeds and quick maneuvering. Central and Inner Asian horsemen had iron stirrups available from the time of the Huns (fifth century). Earlier stirrups were of leather or wood. Stirrups could support the weight of shielded and well-armed soldiers rising in the saddle to shoot arrows or use lances.

part of Asia appeared in sports, music, and painting. Many historians characterize the Tang Empire as “cosmopolitan” because of its breadth and diversity.

## To Chang’an by Land and Sea

Well-maintained roads and water transport connected Chang’an, the capital and hub of Tang communications, to the coastal towns of south China, most importantly Canton (Guangzhou [*gwahng-jo*]). Though the Grand Canal did not reach Chang’an, it was the key component of this transportation network. Chang’an became the center of what is often called the **tributary system**, a type of political relationship dating from Han times by which independent countries acknowledged the Chinese emperor’s supremacy. Each tributary state sent regular embassies to the capital to pay tribute. As symbols of China’s political supremacy, these embassies sometimes meant more to the Chinese than to the tribute-payers, who might have seen them more as a means of accessing the Chinese trading system.

## Upheavals and Repression, 750–879

The later years of the Tang Empire saw increasing turmoil as a result of conflict with Tibetans and Turkic Uighurs. One result was a backlash against “foreigners,” which to Confucians included Buddhists. The Tang elites came to see Buddhism as undermining the Confucian idea



## Law and Society in China and Japan

The Tang law code, compiled in the early seventh century, served as the basis for the Tang legal system and as a model for later dynastic law codes. It combined the centralized authority of the imperial government, as visualized in the legalist tradition dating back to Han times, with Confucian concern for status distinctions and personal relationships. Like contemporary approaches to law in Christian Europe and the Islamic world, it did not fully distinguish between government as a structure of domination and law as an echo of religious and moral values.

Following a Preface, 502 articles, each with several parts, are divided into twelve books. Each article contains a basic ordinance with commentary, subcommentary, and sometimes additional questions. Excerpts from a single article from Book 1, General Principles, follow.

### The Ten Abominations

**Text: The first is called plotting rebellion.**

Subcommentary: The *Gongyang* (GON-gwang) Commentary states: “The ruler or parent has no harborers [of plots]. If he does have such harborers, he must put them to death.” This means that if there are those who harbor rebellious hearts that would harm the ruler or father, he must then put them to death.

The king occupies the most honorable position and receives Heaven’s precious decrees. Like Heaven and Earth, he acts to shelter and support, thus serving as the father and mother of the masses. As his children, as his subjects, they must be loyal and filial. Should they dare to cherish wickedness and have rebellious hearts, however, they will run counter to Heaven’s constancy and violate human principle. Therefore this is called plotting rebellion.

**Text: The second is called plotting great sedition.**

Subcommentary: This type of person breaks laws and destroys order, is against traditional norms, and goes contrary to virtue. . . .

Commentary: Plotting great sedition means to plot to destroy the ancestral temples, tombs, or palaces of the reigning house.

**Text: The third is called plotting treason.**

Subcommentary: The kindness of father and mother is like “great heaven, illimitable.” . . . Let one’s heart be like the *xiao* bird or the *jing* beast, and then love and respect both cease. Those whose relationship is within the five degrees of mourning are the closest of kin. For them to kill each other is the extreme abomination and the utmost in rebellion, destroying and casting aside human principles. Therefore this is called contumacy.

Commentary: Contumacy means to beat or plot to kill [without actually killing] one’s paternal grandparents or parents; or to kill one’s paternal uncles or their wives, or one’s elder brothers or sisters, or one’s maternal grandparents, or one’s husband, or one’s husband’s paternal grandparents, or his parents. . . .

**Text: The fifth is called depravity.**

Subcommentary: This article describes those who are cruel and malicious and who turn their backs on morality. Therefore it is called depravity.

Commentary: Depravity means to kill three members of a single household who have not committed a capital crime, or to dismember someone. . . .

Commentary: The offense also includes the making or keeping of poison or sorcery.

Subcommentary: This means to prepare the poison oneself, or to keep it, or to give it to others in order to harm people. But if the preparation of the poison is not yet completed, this offense does not come under the ten abominations. As to sorcery, there are a great many methods, not all of which can be described.

**Text: The tenth is called incest.**

Subcommentary: The *Zuo Commentary* states: “The woman has her husband’s house; the man has his wife’s chamber; and

of the family as the model for the state. The Confucian scholar Han Yu (768–824) spoke powerfully for a return to traditional Confucian practices. In “Memorial on the Bone of Buddha” written to the emperor in 819 on the occasion of ceremonies to receive a bone of the Buddha in the imperial palace, he scornfully disparages the Buddha and his followers:

*Now Buddha was a man of the barbarians who did not speak the language of China and wore clothes of a different fashion. His sayings did not concern the ways of our ancient kings, nor did his manner of dress conform to their laws. He understood neither the duties that bind sovereign and subject nor the affections of father and son. If he were still alive today and came to our court by order of his ruler, Your Majesty might condescend to receive him, but . . . he would then be escorted to the borders of the state, dismissed, and not allowed to delude the masses. How then, when he has long been dead, could his rotten bones, the*

there must be no defilement on either side.” If this is changed, then there is incest. If one behaves like birds and beasts and introduces licentious associates into one’s family, the rules of morality are confused. Therefore this is called incest.

Commentary: This section includes having illicit sexual intercourse with relatives who are of the fourth degree of mourning or closer. . . .

*In Japan during the same period, Prince Shotoku (573–621), who governed on behalf of the empress Suiko, his aunt, set forth seventeen governing principles: “Prince Shotoku’s Constitution.” These principles, which continued to influence Japanese government for many centuries, reflect Confucian ideals even though the prince was himself a devout Buddhist. The complete text of five of these principles follows:*

## I

Harmony is to be valued, and contentiousness avoided. All men are inclined to partisanship and few are truly discerning. Hence there are some who disobey their lords and fathers and who maintain feuds with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are conciliatory and there is concord in the discussion of all matters, the disposition of affairs comes about naturally. Then what is there that cannot be accomplished?

## VIII

Let ministers and functionaries attend the courts early in the morning, and retire late. The business of the state does not admit of remissness, and the whole day is hardly enough for its accomplishment. If, therefore, the attendance at court is late, emergencies cannot be met; if officials retire soon, the work cannot be completed.

## IX

Trustworthiness is the foundation of right. In everything let there be trustworthiness, for in this there surely consists the good and the bad, success and failure. If the lord and the vassal trust one another, what is there which cannot be accomplished? If the lord and the vassal do not trust one another, everything without exception ends in failure.

## XIII

Let all persons entrusted with office attend equally to their functions. Owing to their illness or to their being sent on missions, their work may sometimes be neglected. But whenever they become able to attend to business, let them be as accommodating as if they had cognizance of it from before and not hinder public affairs on the score of their not having had to do with them.

## XVII

Matters should not be decided by one person alone. They should be discussed with many others. In small matters, of less consequence, many others need not be consulted. It is only in considering weighty matters, where there is a suspicion that they might miscarry, that many others should be involved in debate and discussion so as to arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

## QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why is one of these documents called a law code and the other a constitution?
2. How is the Confucian concern for family relations, duty, and social status differently manifested in the Chinese and Japanese documents?
3. Do these documents seem intended for government officials or for common people?

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*Sources:* First selection from William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. I, 2nd ed., (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 549–552. Second selection from William Theodore de Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. I, *From Earliest Times to 1600*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 50–54. Copyright © 2001 Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

*foul and unlucky remains of his body, be rightly admitted to the palace? Confucius said, “Respect spiritual beings, while keeping at a distance from them.”<sup>2</sup>*

### Wu Zhao, a Female Emperor

Buddhism was also attacked for encouraging women in politics. Wu Zhao (**woo jow**), a woman who had married into the imperial family, seized control of the government in 690 and declared herself emperor. She based her legitimacy on claiming to be a bodhisattva, an enlightened soul who had chosen to remain on earth to lead others to salvation. She also favored Buddhists and Daoists over Confucianists in her court and government.

Later Confucian writers expressed contempt for Wu Zhao and other powerful women, such as the concubine Yang Guifei (**yahng gway-fay**). Bo Zhuyi (**baw joo-ee**), in his poem “Everlasting Remorse,” lamented the influence of women at the Tang court, which had caused “the hearts of fathers and mothers everywhere not to value the birth of boys, but the birth of girls.”<sup>3</sup>





Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous District Museum

**Women of Turfan Grinding Flour** Women throughout Inner and East Asia were critical to all facets of economic life. In the Turkic areas of Central and Inner Asia, women commonly headed households, owned property, and managed businesses. These small figurines, made to be placed in tombs, portray women of Turfan—an Inner Asian area crossed by the Silk Road—performing tasks in the preparation of wheat flour.

Confucian elites heaped every possible charge on prominent women who offended them, accusing Emperor Wu of grotesque tortures and murders, including tossing the dismembered but still living bodies of enemies into wine vats and cauldrons. They blamed Yang Guifei for the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion in 755 (see below).

Serious historians dismiss the stories about Wu Zhao as stereotypical characterizations of “evil” rulers. Eunuchs (castrated palace servants) charged by historians with controlling Chang’an and the Tang court and publicly executing rival bureaucrats represent a similar stereotype. In fact Wu seems to have ruled effectively and was not deposed until 705, when extreme old age (eighty-plus) incapacitated her. Nevertheless, traditional Chinese historians commonly describe unorthodox rulers and all-powerful women as evil, and the truth about Wu will never be known.

### Closing the Monasteries

Even Chinese gentry living in safe and prosperous localities associated Buddhism with social ills. People who worried about “barbarians” ruining their society pointed to Buddhism as evidence of the foreign evil, since it had such strong roots in Inner Asia and Tibet. Because

Buddhism shunned earthly ties, monks and nuns severed relations with the secular world in search of enlightenment. They paid no taxes, served in no army. They deprived their families of advantageous marriage alliances and denied descendants to their ancestors. The Confucian elites saw all this as threatening to the family and to the family estates that underlay the Tang economic and political structure.

By the ninth century, hundreds of thousands of people had entered tax-exempt Buddhist institutions. In 840 the government moved to crush the monasteries whose tax exemption had allowed them to accumulate land, serfs, and precious objects, often as gifts. Within five years 4,600 temples had been destroyed. Now an enormous amount of land and 150,000 workers were returned to the tax rolls.

## SECTION REVIEW

- After the period of disunity following the fall of the Han, China was united under the Sui, followed by the Tang with its founder Li Shimin.
- Tang culture was based on both Inner Asia nomadic culture and war expertise and Chinese tradition.
- The Tang Empire, along with the rival Uighur and Tibetan states, experienced political problems that steadily weakened it.
- In China, this turmoil resulted in a backlash against foreign and female cultural influences and especially Buddhism, as Tang elites led a neo-Confucian reaction.
- The Tang fell due to a combination of destabilizing forces.

**Buddhist Cave Painting at Dunhuang** Hundreds of caves dating to the period when Buddhism enjoyed popularity and government favor in China survive in Gansu province, which was beyond the reach of the Tang rulers when they turned against Buddhism. This cave, dated to the period 565–576, depicts the historical Buddha flanked by bodhisattvas. Scenes of the Buddha preaching appear on the wall to the left.

Pierre Colombe/Corbis



Buddhist centers like the cave monasteries at Dunhuang were protected by local warlords loyal to Buddhist rulers in Inner Asia. Nevertheless, China's cultural heritage suffered a great loss in the dissolution of the monasteries. Some sculptures and grottoes survived only in defaced form. Wooden temples and façades sheltering great stone carvings burned to the ground. Monasteries became legal again in later times, but Buddhism never recovered the influence of early Tang times.

#### An Lushan Rebellion

The campaigns of expansion in the seventh century had left the empire dependent on local military commanders and a complex tax collection system. Reverses like the Battle of the Talas River in 751, where Arabs halted Chinese expansion into Central Asia, led to military demoralization and underfunding. In 755 An Lushan, a Tang general on the northeast frontier, led about 200,000 soldiers in rebellion. The emperor fled Chang'an and executed his favorite concubine, Yang Guifei, who was rumored to be An Lushan's lover. The rebellion lasted for eight years and resulted in new powers for the provincial military governors who helped suppress it.

#### Further Unrest

A disgruntled member of the gentry, Huang Chao (**wang show**), led the most devastating uprising between 879 and 881. Despite his ruthless treatment of the villages he controlled, his rebellion attracted poor farmers and tenants who could not protect themselves from local bosses and oppressive landlords, or who simply did not know where else to turn in the deepening chaos. The new hatred of "barbarians" spurred the rebels to murder thousands of foreign residents in Canton and Beijing (**bay-jeeng**).

Local warlords finally wiped out the rebels, but Tang society did not find peace. Refugees, migrant workers, and homeless people became common sights. Residents of northern China fled to the southern frontiers as groups from Inner Asia moved into localities in the north. Though Tang emperors continued in Chang'an until a warlord terminated their line in 907, they never regained power after Huang Chao's rebellion.

## THE EMERGENCE OF EAST ASIA, TO 1200

In the aftermath of the Tang, three new states emerged and competed to inherit its legacy (see Map 10.2). The Liao (**lee-OW**) Empire of the Khitan (**kee-THAN**) people, pastoral nomads related to the Mongols living on the northeastern frontier, established their rule in the north. They centered their government on several cities, but the emperors preferred life in nomad



encampments. On the Inner Asian frontier in northwestern China, the Minyak people (cousins of the Tibetans) established a state they called “Tanggut” (1038–1227) (**TAHNG-gut**) to show their connection with the fallen empire. The third state, the Chinese-speaking **Song Empire**, came into being in 960 in central China.

### Competing Traditions

**Song Empire** Empire in central and southern China (960–1126) while the Liao people controlled the north. Empire in southern China (1127–1279; the “Southern Song”) while the Jin people controlled the north. Distinguished for its advances in technology, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics.

### Khitan People

These states embodied the political ambitions of peoples with different religious and philosophical systems—Mahayana Buddhism among the Liao, Tibetan Buddhism among the Tangguts, and Confucianism among the Song. Cut off from Inner Asia, the Song used advanced seafaring and sailing technologies to forge maritime connections with other states in East, West, and Southeast Asia. The Song elite shared the late Tang dislike of “barbaric” or “foreign” influences as they tried to cope with multiple enemies that heavily taxed their military capacities. Meanwhile, Korea, Japan, and some Southeast Asian states strengthened political and cultural ties with China.

## The Liao and Jin Challenge

The Liao Empire of the Khitan people extended from Siberia to Inner Asia. Variations on the Khitan name became the name for China in these distant regions: “Kitai” for the Mongols, “Khitai” for the Russians, and “Cathay” for Italian merchants like Marco Polo who reported on China in Europe (see Chapter 12).

The Liao rulers prided themselves on their pastoral traditions as horse and cattle breeders, the continuing source of their military might, and they made no attempt to create a single elite culture. They encouraged Chinese elites to use their own language, study their own classics, and see the emperor through Confucian eyes; and they encouraged other peoples to use their own languages and see the emperor as a champion of Buddhism or as a nomadic chieftain. On balance, Buddhism far outweighed Confucianism in this and other northern states, where rulers depended on their roles as bodhisattvas or as Buddhist kings to legitimate power. Liao rule lasted from 916 to 1125.


Superb horsemen and archers, the Khitans also challenged the Song with siege machines from China and Central Asia. A truce concluded in 1005 required the Song emperor to pay the Liao great quantities of cash and silk annually. A century later, the Song tired of paying tribute and secretly allied with the Jurchens of northeastern Asia, who also resented Liao rule. In 1115

the Jurchens first destroyed the Liao capital in Mongolia and proclaimed their own empire, the Jin (see Map 10.2), and then turned on the Song.

The Jurchens grew rice, millet, and wheat, but they also spent a good deal of time hunting, fishing, and tending livestock. Using Khitan military arts and political organization, they became formidable enemies in an all-out campaign against the Song in 1127. They laid siege to the Song capital, Kaifeng (**kie-fuhng**), and captured the Song emperor. Within a few years the Song withdrew south of the Yellow River and established a new capital at Hangzhou (**hahng-jo**), leaving central as well as northern China in Jurchen control (see Map 10.3). Annual payments to the Jin Empire staved off further warfare. Historians generally refer to this period as the “Southern Song” (1127–1279).

## Song Industries

The Southern Song came closer to initiating an industrial revolution than any other premodern state. Many Song

 Interactive Map



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**MAP 10.2** Liao and Song Empires, ca. 1100 The states of Liao in the north and Song in the south generally ceased open hostilities after a treaty in 1005 stabilized the border and imposed an annual payment on Song China.






**AP\* Exam Tip** Be aware of the intellectual and technological developments of major empires, including Tang and Song China.



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**MAP 10.3 Jin and Southern Song Empires, ca. 1200** After 1127 Song abandoned its northern territories to Jin. The Southern Song continued the policy of annual payments—to Jin rather than Liao—and maintained high military preparedness to prevent further invasions.

 Interactive Map

advances in technology, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics had come to China in Tang times, sometimes from very distant places. Song officials, scholars, and businessmen had the motivation and resources to adapt this Tang lore to meet their military, agricultural, and administrative needs.

Song mathematicians introduced the use of fractions, first employing them to describe the phases of the moon. From lunar observations, Song astronomers constructed a very precise calendar and, alone among the world's astronomers, noted the explosion of the Crab Nebula in 1054. Song inventors drew on their knowledge of celestial coordinates, particularly the Pole Star, to refine compass design. The magnetic compass, an earlier Chinese invention, shrank in size in Song times and gained a fixed pivot point for the needle. With a protective glass cover, the compass now became suitable for seafaring, a use first attested in 1090.

Development of the seaworthy compass coincided with new techniques in building China's main oceangoing ship, the **junk**. A stern-mounted rudder improved the steering of the large ship in uneasy seas, and watertight bulkheads helped keep it afloat in emergencies. The shipwrights of the Persian Gulf soon copied these features in their ship designs.

Because they needed iron and steel to make weapons for their army of 1.25 million men, the Song rulers fought their northern rivals for control of mines in north China. Production of coal and iron soared. By the end of the eleventh century cast iron production reached about 125,000 tons (113,700 metric tons) annually, putting it on a par with the output of eighteenth-century Britain. Engineers became skilled at high-temperature metallurgy using enormous bellows, often driven by water wheels, to superheat the molten ore. Military engineers used iron to buttress defensive works because it was impervious to fire or concussion. Armorers mass-produced body armor. Iron construction also appeared in bridges and small buildings. Mass-production techniques for bronze and ceramics in use in China for nearly two thousand years were adapted to iron casting and assembly.

To counter cavalry assaults, the Song experimented with **gunpowder**, which they initially used to propel clusters of flaming arrows. During the wars against the Jurchens in the 1100s the Song introduced a new and terrifying weapon. Shells launched from Song fortifications exploded in the midst of the enemy, blowing out iron shrapnel and dismembering men and horses. The short range of these shells limited them to defensive uses.

## Economy and Society in Song China

In a warlike era, Song elite culture idealized civil pursuits. Socially, the civil man outranked the military man. Private academies, designed to train young men for the official examinations, became influential in culture and politics. New interpretations of Confucian teachings became so important and influential that the term **neo-Confucianism** is used for Song and later versions of Confucian thought.

Zhu Xi (**jew she**) (1130–1200), the most important early neo-Confucian thinker, wrote in reaction to the many centuries during which Buddhism and Daoism had overshadowed the precepts of Confucius. He and others worked out a systematic approach to cosmology that focused on the central conception that human nature is moral, rational, and essentially good. To combat the Buddhist dismissal of worldly affairs as a transitory distraction, they reemphasized

### Iron and Steel

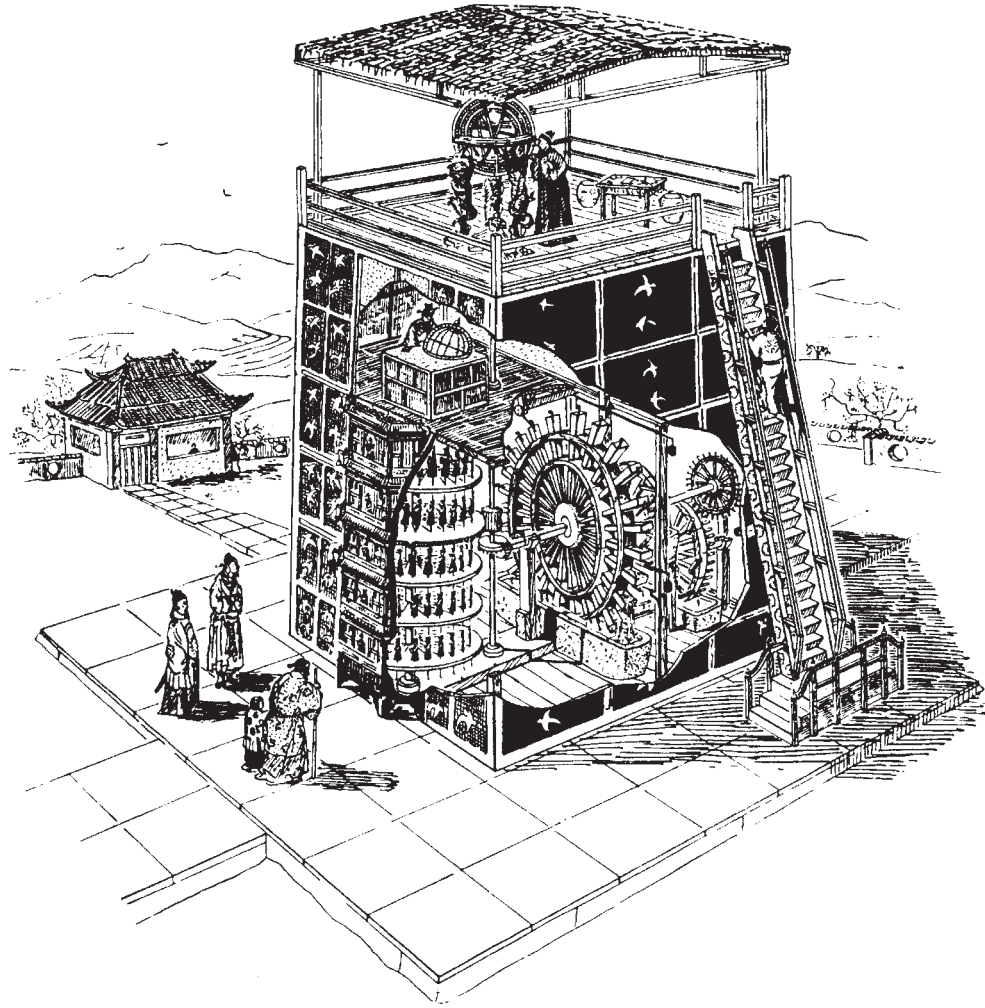
**junk** A very large flatbottom sailing ship produced in the Tang, Song, and Ming Empires, specially designed for long-distance commercial travel.

**gunpowder** A mixture of saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal, in various proportions. The formula, brought to China in the 400s or 500s, was first used to make fumigators to keep away insect pests and evil spirits. In later centuries it was used to make explosives and grenades and to propel cannonballs, shot, and bullets.

**neo-Confucianism** Term used to describe new approaches to understanding classic Confucian texts that became the basic ruling philosophy of China from the Song period to the twentieth century.

**Su Song's Astronomical Clock**

This gigantic clock built at Kaifeng between 1088 and 1092 combined mathematics, astronomy, and calendar-making with skillful engineering. The team overseen by Su Song placed an armillary sphere on the observation platform and linked it with chains to the water-driven central mechanism shown in the cutaway view. The water wheel also rotated the Buddha statues in the multistory pagoda the spectators are looking at. Other devices displayed the time of the day, the month, and the year.



From Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 4. After the original diagram in Su Song's treatise *Xinyi Xiangfayao*, 1092.

individual moral and social responsibility. Their human ideal was the sage, a person who could preserve mental stability and serenity while dealing conscientiously with troubling social problems. Whereas earlier Confucian thinkers had written about sage kings and political leaders, the neo-Confucians espoused the spiritual idea of universal sagehood, a state that could be achieved through proper study of the new Confucian principles and cosmology.

**Meditative Buddhism**

**Zen** The Japanese word for a branch of Mahayana Buddhism based on highly disciplined meditation. It is known in Sanskrit as *dhyana*, in Chinese as *chan*, and in Korean as *son*.

Popular Buddhist sects also persisted during the Song, as indicated by the song-story line quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "We Buddhists and Confucians are of one family." While historically suitable for the time before the Tang abolition of Buddhist monasteries when the original story of Ying-ying was written, it is unlikely that the line would have pleased a Song audience if anti-Buddhist feelings had remained so ferocious. Some Buddhists elaborated on Tang-era folk practices derived from India and Tibet. The best known, Chan Buddhism (known as **Zen** in Japan and as *son* in Korea), asserted that mental discipline alone could win salvation.

Meditation, a key Chan practice, was employed by Confucians as well as Buddhists. It afforded prospective officials relief from studying for civil service examinations, which continued into the Song from the Tang period. Unlike the ancient Han policy of hiring and promoting on the basis of recommendations, Song-style examinations involved a large bureaucracy. Test questions, which changed each time the examinations were given, often related to economic management or foreign policy even though they were always based on Confucian classics.

**Examination System**

Hereditary class distinctions meant less than they had in Tang times, when noble lineages played a greater role in the structure of power. The new system recruited the most talented men, whatever their origin. Yet men from wealthy families enjoyed an advantage. Preparation for the tests consumed so much time that peasant boys could rarely compete.



### Printing

**movable type** Type in which each individual character is cast on a separate piece of metal. It replaced woodblock printing, allowing for the arrangement of individual letters and other characters on a page, rather than requiring the carving of entire pages at a time. It may have been invented in Korea in the thirteenth century.

### Population Growth

Success in the examinations brought good marriage prospects, the chance for a high salary, and enormous prestige. Failure could bankrupt a family and ruin a man both socially and psychologically. This put great pressure on candidates, who spent days writing essays in tiny, dim, airless examination cells.

A technical change from woodblock to an early form of **movable type** made printing cheaper. To promote its ideological goals, the Song government authorized the mass production of test preparation books in the years before 1000. Although a man had to be literate to read the preparation books and basic education was still rare, a growing number of candidates entered the Song bureaucracy without noble, gentry, or elite backgrounds.

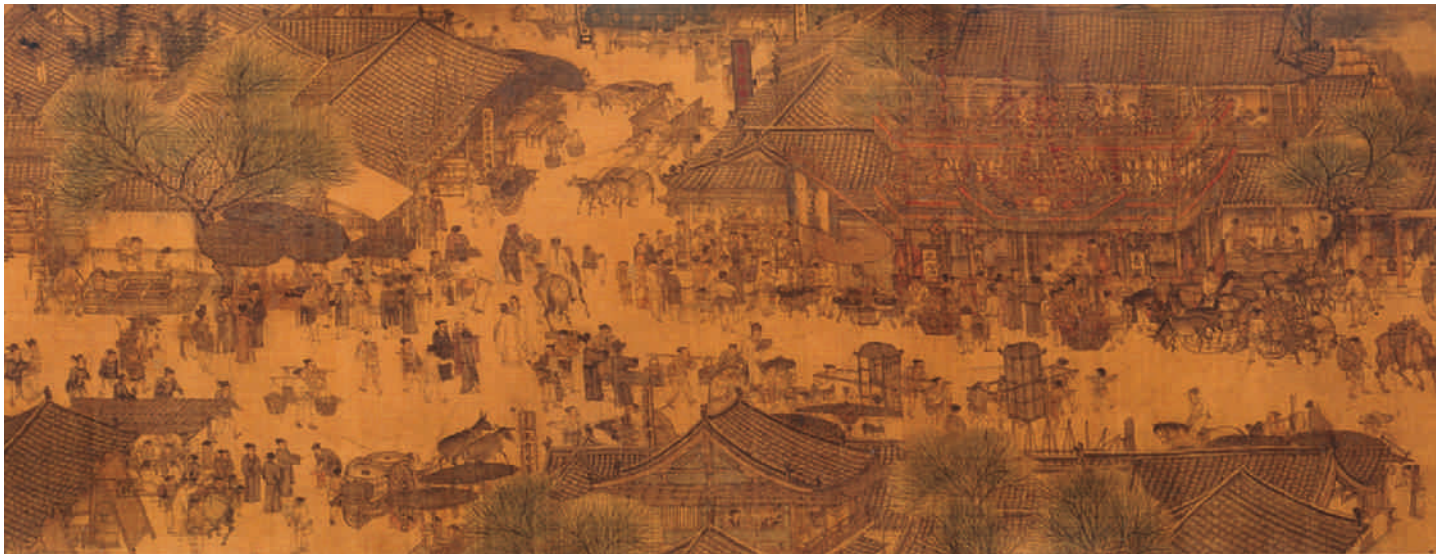
The availability of printed books changed country life as well, since landlords gained access to expert advice on planting and irrigation techniques, harvesting, tree cultivation, threshing, and weaving. Landlords frequently gathered their tenants and workers to show them illustrated texts and explain their meaning. New agricultural land was developed south of the Yangtze River, and iron implements such as plows and rakes, first used in the Tang era, were adapted to southern wet-rice cultivation.

The growing profitability of agriculture interested ambitious members of the gentry. Still a frontier for Chinese settlers under the Tang, the south saw increasing concentration of land in the hands of a few wealthy families. In the process, the indigenous inhabitants of the region, related to the modern-day populations of Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos, retreated into the mountains or southward toward Vietnam.

During the 1100s the total population of the Chinese territories, spurred by prosperity, rose above 100 million. The leading Song cities had fewer than a million inhabitants but were still among the largest cities in the world. Health and crowding posed problems in the Song capitals. Multistory wooden apartment houses fronted on narrow streets—sometimes only 4 or 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 meters) wide—that were clogged by peddlers or families spending time outdoors. The crush of people called for new techniques in waste management, water supply, and firefighting.

In Hangzhou engineers diverted the nearby river to flow through the city, flushing away waste and disease. Arab and European travelers who had firsthand experience with the Song capital, and who were sensitive to urban conditions in their own societies, expressed amazement at Hangzhou's amenities: restaurants, parks, bookstores, wine shops, tea houses, theaters, and the entertainments mentioned at the start of this chapter.

**Going Up the River** Song cities hummed with commercial and industrial activity, much of it concentrated on the rivers and canals linking the capital Kaifeng to the provinces. This detail from *Going Upriver at the Qingming [Spring] Festival* shows a tiny portion of the scroll painting's panorama. Painted by Zhang Zeduan sometime before 1125, its depiction of daily life makes it an important source of information on working people. Before open shop fronts and tea houses a camel caravan departs, donkey carts are unloaded, a scholar rides loftily (if gingerly) on horseback, and women of wealth go by in closed sedan-chairs.



The Palace Museum, Beijing



**The “Players”** Women—often enslaved—entertained at Chinese courts from early times. Tang art often depicts women with slender figures, but Tang taste also admired more robust physiques. Song women, usually pale with willowy figures, appear as here with bound feet. The practice appeared in Tang times but was not widespread until the Song, when the image of weak, house-bound women unable to work became a status symbol and pushed aside the earlier enthusiasm for healthy women who participated in family business.



The Palace Museum, Beijing

### Trade and Credit

The idea of credit, originating in the robust long-distance trade of the Tang period, spread widely under the Song. Intercity or interregional credit—what the Song called “flying money”—depended on the acceptance of guarantees that the paper could be redeemed for coinage at another location. The public accepted the practice because credit networks tended to be managed by families, so that brothers and cousins were usually honoring each other’s certificates.

“Flying money” certificates differed from government-issued paper money, which the Song pioneered. In some years, military expenditures consumed 80 percent of the government budget. The state responded to this financial pressure by distributing paper money. But this made inflation so severe that by the beginning of the 1100s paper money was trading for only 1 percent of its face value. Eventually the government withdrew paper money and instead imposed new taxes, sold monopolies, and offered financial incentives to merchants.

### Tax Farming

Hard-pressed for the revenue needed to maintain the army, canals, roads, waterworks, and other state functions, the government finally resorted to tax farming, selling the rights to tax collection to private individuals. Tax farmers made their profit by collecting the maximum amount and sending an agreed-upon smaller sum to the government. This meant exorbitant rates for taxable services, such as tolls, and much heavier tax burdens on the common people.

### New Class Structure

Rapid economic growth undermined the remaining government monopolies and the traditional strict regulation of business. Now merchants and artisans as well as gentry and officials could make fortunes. With land no longer the only source of wealth, the traditional social hierarchy common to an agricultural economy weakened, while cities, commerce, consumption, and the use of money and credit boomed. Urban life reflected the elite’s growing taste for fine fabrics, porcelain, exotic foods, large houses, and exquisite paintings and books.

### Status of Women

In conjunction with the backlash against Buddhism and revival of Confucianism that began under the Tang and intensified under the Song, women experienced subordination, legal disenfranchisement, and social restriction. Merchants spent long periods away from home, and many maintained several wives in different locations. Frequently they depended on wives to manage their homes and even their businesses in their absence. But though women took on responsibility for the management of their husbands’ property, their own property rights suffered legal

erosion. Under Song law, a woman's property automatically passed to her husband, and women could not remarry if their husbands divorced them or died.

The subordination of women proved compatible with Confucianism, and it became fashionable to educate girls just enough to read simplified versions of Confucian philosophy that emphasized the lowly role of women. Modest education made these young women more desirable as companions for the sons of gentry or noble families and as literate mothers in lower-ranking families aspiring to improve their status. The poet Li Qingzhao (**lee CHING-jow**) (1083–1141) acknowledged and made fun of her unusual status as a highly celebrated female writer:

*Although I've studied poetry for thirty years  
I try to keep my mouth shut and avoid reputation.  
Now who is this nosy gentleman talking about my poetry  
Like Yang Ching-chih (**yahng SHING-she**)  
Who spoke of Hsiang Ssu (**sang sue**) everywhere he went.<sup>4</sup>*

Her reference is to a hermit poet of the ninth century who was continually and extravagantly praised by a court official, Yang Ching-chih.

Female footbinding first appeared among slave dancers at the Tang court, but it did not become widespread until the Song period. The bindings forced the toes under and toward the heel, so that the bones eventually broke and the woman could not walk on her own. In noble and gentry families, footbinding began between ages five and seven. In less wealthy families, girls worked until they were older, so footbinding began only in a girl's teens.

Many literate men condemned the maiming of innocent girls and the general uselessness of footbinding. Nevertheless, bound feet became a status symbol. By 1200 a woman with unbound feet had become undesirable in elite circles, and mothers of elite status, or aspiring to such status, almost without exception bound their daughters' feet. They knew that girls with unbound feet faced rejection. Working women and the indigenous peoples of the south, where northern practices took a longer time to penetrate, did not practice footbinding. Consequently they enjoyed considerably more mobility and economic independence than did elite Chinese women.



**AP\* Exam Tip** The reasons for footbinding and its relation to status in Song China are important to understand.

### Footbinding

## SECTION REVIEW

- Several rival states replaced the fallen Tang Empire, and the close relations between Central Asia and East Asia ended.
- The Liao and Jin Empires encouraged culturally diverse societies and confronted Song China with formidable military threats.
- The Song Empire of central and southern China built upon Tang achievements in technology and science and promoted civil ideals.
- Under the Song, print culture developed, urban populations rose, commercial activity grew through innovation, and women were subordinated to men.

## NEW KINGDOMS IN EAST ASIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

### Confucian Culture

The best possibilities for expanding the Confucian world-view of the Song lay with newly emerging kingdoms to the east and south. Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, like Song China, devoted great effort to the cultivation of rice. This fit well with Confucian social ideas. Tending the young rice plants, irrigating the rice paddies, and managing the harvest required coordination among many village and kin groups and rewarded hierarchy, obedience, and self-discipline.

Confucianism also justified using agricultural profits to support the education, safety, and comfort of the literate elite. In each of these new kingdoms Song civilization melded with indigenous cultural and historical traditions to create a distinctive synthesis. Farther to the south, the Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya marked the boundary of Chinese influence. It maintained close maritime relations with merchants from the Indian Ocean.

### Chinese Influences

Korea, Japan, and Vietnam had first centralized power under ruling houses in the early Tang period, and their state ideologies continued to resemble that of the early Tang, when Buddhism and Confucianism seemed compatible. Government offices went to noble families and did not

## Writing in East Asia, 600–1200

An ideographic writing system that originated in China became a communications tool throughout East Asia. Variations on this system, based more on depictions of meanings than representations of sound, spread widely by the time of the Sui and Tang Empires. Many East Asian peoples adapted ideographic techniques to writing languages unrelated to Chinese in grammar or sound.

The Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese often simplified Chinese characters and associated them with the sounds of their own non-Chinese languages. For instance, the Chinese character *an*, meaning “peace” (Fig. 1), was pronounced “an” in Japanese and was familiar as a Chinese character to Confucian scholars in Japan’s Heian (*hay-ahn*) period. However, nonscholars simplified the character and used it to write the Japanese sound “a” (Fig. 2). A set of more than thirty of these syllabic symbols adapted from Chinese characters could represent the inflected forms (forms with grammatical endings) of any Japanese word. Murasaki Shikibu used such a syllabic system when she wrote *The Tale of Genji*.

In Vietnam and later in northern Asia, phonetic and ideographic elements combined in new ways. The apparent circles in some *chu nom* writing from Vietnam (Fig. 3) derive from the Chinese character for “mouth” and indicate a primary sound association for the word. The Khitans, who spoke a language related to Mongolian, developed an ideographic system of their

own, inspired by Chinese characters. The Chinese character *wang* (Fig. 4), meaning “king, prince, ruler,” was changed to represent the Khitan word for “emperor” by adding an upward stroke representing a “superior” ruler (Fig. 5). Because the system was ideographic, we do not know the pronunciation of this Khitan word. The Khitan character for “God” or “Heaven” adds a top stroke representing the “supreme” ruler or power to the character meaning “ruler” (Fig. 6). Though inspired by Chinese characters, Khitan writings could not be read by anyone who was not specifically educated in them.

The Khitans developed another system to represent the sounds and grammar of their language. They used small, simplified elements arranged within an imaginary frame to indicate the sounds in any word. This idea might have come from the phonetic script used by the Uighurs. Here (Fig. 7) we see the word for horse in a Khitan inscription. Fitting sound elements within a frame also occurred later in *hangul*, the Korean phonetic system introduced in the 1400s. Here (Fig. 8) we see the two words making up the country name “Korea.”

The Chinese writing system served the Chinese elite well. But peoples speaking unrelated languages continually experimented with the Chinese invention to produce new ways of expressing themselves. Some of the resulting sound-based writing systems remain in common use; others are still being deciphered.



Figure 1



Figure 2

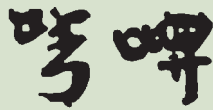


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

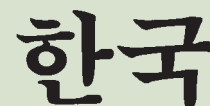


Figure 8

depend on passing examinations on Confucian texts. Landowning and agriculture remained the major sources of income, and landowners faced no challenges from a merchant class or urban elite.

Nevertheless, learned men prized literacy in classical Chinese and a good knowledge of Confucian texts (see Environment and Technology: Writing in East Asia, 600–1200). Though formal education was available to only a small number of people, the ruling and landholding elites sought to instill Confucian ideals of hierarchy and harmony among the general population (see Diversity and Dominance: Law and Society in China and Japan).

### Korea

Our first knowledge of Korea, Japan, and Vietnam comes from early Chinese officials and travelers. When the Qin Empire established its first colony in the Korean peninsula in the third century B.C.E., Chinese bureaucrats began documenting Korean history and customs. Han writers noted the horse breeding, strong hereditary elites, and **shamanism** (belief in the ability of certain individuals to contact ancestors and the invisible spirit world) of Korea’s small kingdoms. But Korea quickly absorbed Confucianism and Buddhism.

Mountainous in the east and north, Korea was heavily forested until modern times. The land that can be cultivated (less than 20 percent) lies mostly in the south, where a warm climate and

**shamanism** The practice of identifying special individuals (shamans) who will interact with spirits for the benefit of the community. Characteristic of the Korean kingdoms of the early medieval period and of early societies of Central Asia.





Kim Wonyong, ed. *The Complete Collection of Korean Art*, Vol. 4. Seoul: Tonghwa chulp'an kongsae, 1974, plate 55, p. 76

**Korean Wall Painting** This depiction of women dancing before an audience comes from a sixth-century tomb near an early Korean capital north of the Yalu River.

monsoon rains support two crops per year. Population movements from Manchuria, Mongolia, and Siberia to the north and to Japan in the south promoted the spread of languages that were very different from Chinese but distantly related to the Turkic tongues of Inner Asia.

#### Aristocratic Families

**Koryo** Korean kingdom founded in 918 and destroyed by a Mongol invasion in 1259.

#### Printing with Movable Type

In the sixth century the dominant landholding families made inherited status—the “bone ranks”—permanent in Silla (**SILL-ah** or **SHILL-ah**), a kingdom in the southeast of the peninsula. In 668 the northern Koguryo kingdom came to an end after prolonged conflict with the Sui and Tang. Supported by the Tang, Silla took control of much of the Korean peninsula. The Silla rulers imitated Tang government and examined officials on the Confucian classics. The fall of the Tang in the early 900s coincided with Silla’s collapse and enabled the ruling house of **Koryo** (**KAW-ree-oh**), from which the modern name “Korea” derives, to rule a united peninsula for the next three centuries. Threatened constantly by the Liao and then the Jin in northern China, Koryo maintained amicable relations with Song China in the south. The Koryo kings supported Buddhism and made superb printed editions of Buddhist texts.

The oldest surviving woodblock print in Chinese characters comes from Korea in the middle 700s. Commonly used during the Tang period, woodblock printing required great technical skill. A calligrapher would write the text on thin paper, which would then be pasted upside down on a block of wood. Once wetted, the characters showed through from the back, and an artisan would carve away the wooden surface surrounding each character. A fresh block had to be carved for each printed page. Korean artisans developed their own advances in printing, including experiments with movable type. By Song times, Korean experiments reached China, where further improvements led to metal or porcelain type from which texts could be cheaply printed.

## Japan

#### Islands and Mountains

Japan consists of four main islands and many smaller ones stretching in an arc from as far south as Georgia to as far north as Maine. The nearest point of contact with the Asian mainland lies 100 miles away in southern Korea. In early times Japan was even more mountainous and heavily forested than Korea, with only 11 percent of its land area suitable for cultivation. Mild winters

and monsoon rains supported the earliest population centers on the coastlands of the Inland Sea between Honshu and Shikoku Islands. The first rulers to extend their power broadly in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. were based in the Yamato River Basin on the Kinai Plain at the eastern end of the sea.

### The Yamato Regime

The first Chinese description of Japan, dating from the fourth century, tells of an island at the eastern edge of the world, divided into hundreds of small countries and ruled over by a shamaness named Himiko or Pimiko. How the unification of Japan occurred remains a question, but horse-riding warriors from Korea may have played a central role in uniting these small countries under the Yamato-based rulers.

In the mid-600s these rulers implemented the Taika (**TIE-kah**) and other reforms, giving the Yamato regime the key features of Tang government, which they knew of from Korean contacts and embassies to Chang'an sent by five different kings. A legal code, an official variety of Confucianism, and an official reverence for Buddhism blended with the local recognition of indigenous and immigrant chieftains as territorial administrators. Within a century, a centralized government with a complex system of law had emerged, as attested by a massive history in the Confucian style.

### Women Rulers

Women from the aristocracy became royal consorts and thereby linked their kinsmen with the royal court. At the death of her husband in 592, Suiko, a woman from the immigrant aristocratic family of Soga, became empress. She occupied the throne until 628, enjoying a longer reign than any other ruler down to the nineteenth century. Asuka, her capital, saw a flowering of Buddhist art, and her nephew Shotoku opened relations with Sui China and promulgated in 604

**Imperial Palace in Kyoto** The first version of the palace was built in the eighth century two kilometers away from the current site. The Kyoto palace complex was the primary residence of the Japanese emperors until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the imperial capital moved to Tokyo. Being built of wood with cypress-bark roofing, the buildings have been repeatedly ravaged by fire, but each restoration has utilized traditional materials in an effort to preserve the historical forms. The latest rebuilding took place in 1855. The palace complex includes gardens and numerous buildings in a variety of styles particular to different periods in its history.



Christian Kober/Alamy



### Chinese Influences

a “Constitution” that had lasting influence on Japan’s governing philosophy (see Diversity and Dominance: Law and Society in China and Japan).

The Japanese mastered Chinese building techniques so well that Nara (**NAH-rah**) and Kyoto, Japan’s early capitals, provide invaluable evidence of the wooden architecture long since vanished from China. During the eighth century Japan in some ways surpassed China in Buddhist studies. In 752 dignitaries from all over Mahayana Buddhist Asia gathered at the enormous Todaiji temple, near Nara, to celebrate the “eye-opening” of the “Great Buddha” statue.

### Differences from China

Though the Japanese adopted Chinese building styles and some street plans, Japanese cities were built without walls. Central Japan was not plagued by constant warfare. Also, the Confucian Mandate of Heaven, which justified dynastic changes, played no role in legitimating Japanese government. The *tenno*—often called “emperor” in English—belonged to a family believed to have ruled Japan since the beginning of history. The dynasty never changed. A prime minister and the leaders of the native religion, in later times called Shinto, the “way of the gods,” exercised real control.



**AP\* Exam Tip** Be aware of the impact that China had on its neighbors during this period.

By 750 the government in Nara had reached its zenith, employing 7,000 men in its central bureaucracy. The rulers encouraged an extension of Japanese rice-growing culture into the territory of the Hayato people of southern Kyushu and into northeastern Honshu, where the Emishi, a non-Japanese indigenous population, practiced slash-and-burn agriculture.

### Fujiwara Clan

**Fujiwara** Aristocratic family that dominated the Japanese imperial court between the ninth and twelfth centuries.

In 794 the central government moved to Kyoto, usually called by its ancient name, Heian (**hay-ahn**). Legally centralized government lasted there until 1185, though power became decentralized toward the end. Members of the **Fujiwara (foo-jee-WAH-rah)** clan—a family of priests, bureaucrats, and warriors who had succeeded the Soga clan in influence—controlled power and protected the emperor. Fujiwara dominance favored men of Confucian learning over the generally illiterate warriors. Noblemen of the Fujiwara period read the Chinese classics and appreciated painting and poetry.

Pursuit of an aesthetic way of life prompted the Fujiwara nobles to entrust responsibility for local government, policing, and tax collection to their warriors. Though often of humble origins, a small number of warriors had achieved wealth and power by the late 1000s. By the middle 1100s the nobility had lost control, and civil war between rival warrior clans engulfed the capital.

### The Tale of Genji of Lady Murasaki

Like other East Asian states influenced by Confucianism, the elite families of Fujiwara Japan did not encourage education for women. However, this did not prevent exceptional women from having a strong cultural impact. The hero of the celebrated Japanese novel about Fujiwara court culture, *The Tale of Genji*, written around the year 1000 by the noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu, remarks: “Women should have a general knowledge of several subjects, but it gives a bad impression if they show themselves to be attached to a particular branch of learning.”<sup>5</sup>

Fujiwara noblewomen lived in near-total isolation, generally spending their time on cultural pursuits and the study of Buddhism. To communicate with their families or among themselves, they depended on writing. The simplified syllabic script that they used represented the Japanese language in its fully inflected form (the Chinese classical script used by Fujiwara men could not do so). Loneliness, free time, and a ready instrument for expression produced an outpouring of poetry, diaries, and storytelling by women of the Fujiwara era.

### The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon

Sei Shonagon (**SAY SHOH-nah-gohn**), a lady attending one of the royal consorts, composed her *Pillow Book* between 996 and 1021. Most likely named for being kept by the author’s pillow so she could jot down occasional thoughts, this famous work begins:

*Spring is best at dawn as gradually the hilltops lighten, while the light grows brighter until there are purple-tinged clouds trailing through the sky.*

*Summer is best at night. That goes without saying when there is a full moon. But when fireflies flit here and there in a dark sky, that too is wonderful. It is even wonderful when it is raining.<sup>6</sup>*

### The Shogunate

**Kamakura Shogunate** The first of Japan’s decentralized military governments (1185–1333).

Military values acquired increasing importance during the period 1156–1185 when warfare between rival clans culminated in the establishment of the **Kamakura (kah-mah-KOO-rah) Shogunate** in eastern Honshu, far from the old religious and political center at Kyoto. The standing of the Fujiwara family fell as nobles and the emperor hurried to accommodate the new warlords. *The Tale of the Heike*, an anonymously composed thirteenth-century epic account of the clan war, reflects a Buddhist appreciation of the impermanence of worldly things, a view that



became common among the new warrior class. This class, in later times called *samurai*, eventually absorbed some of the Fujiwara aristocratic values, but the ascendancy of the nonmilitary civil elite had come to an end.

## Vietnam

### Rice Agriculture

Not until Tang times did the relationship between Vietnam and China become close enough for economic and cultural interchange to play an important role. Occupying the coastal regions east of the mountainous spine of mainland Southeast Asia, Vietnam's economic and political life centered on two fertile river valleys, the Red River in the north and the Mekong (**may-KONG**) in the south. The rice-based agriculture of Vietnam made the region well suited for integration with southern China. In both regions the wet climate and hilly terrain demanded expertise in irrigation.

### Relations with China

Early Vietnamese peoples may have preceded the Chinese in using draft animals in farming and working with metal. But in Tang and Song times the elites of “Annam” (**ahn-nahm**)—as the Chinese called early Vietnam—adopted Confucian bureaucratic training, Mahayana Buddhism, and other aspects of Chinese culture. Annamese elites continued to rule in the Tang style after that dynasty's fall. Annam assumed the name Dai Viet (**die vee-yet**) in 936 and maintained good relations with Song China as an independent country.

**Champa rice** Quick-maturing rice that can allow two harvests in one growing season. Originally introduced into Champa from India, it was later sent to China as a tribute gift by the Champa state.

Champa, located in what is now southern Vietnam, rivaled the Dai Viet state. The cultures of India and the Malay Peninsula strongly influenced Champa through maritime networks of trade and communication. During the Tang period, Champa fought with Dai Viet, but both kingdoms cooperated with the less threatening Song. Among the tribute gifts brought to the Song court by Champa emissaries was **Champa rice** (originally from India). Chinese farmers soon made use of this fast-maturing variety to improve their yields of the essential crop.

### Women's Roles

Vietnam shared the general Confucian interest in hierarchy, but attitudes toward women, like those in Korea and Japan, differed from the Chinese model. None of the societies adopted footbinding. In Korea strong family alliances that functioned like political and economic organizations allowed women a role in negotiating and disposing of property. Before the adoption of Confucianism, Annamese women had enjoyed higher status than women in China, perhaps because both women and men participated in wet-rice cultivation. The Trung sisters of Vietnam, who lived in the second century C.E. and led local farmers in resistance against the Han Empire, still serve as national symbols in Vietnam and as local heroes in southern China.

**Srivijaya** A state based on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, between the seventh and eleventh centuries C.E. It amassed wealth and power by a combination of selective adaptation of Indian technologies and concepts, control of the lucrative trade routes between India and China, and skillful showmanship and diplomacy in holding together a disparate realm of inland and coastal territories.

## Srivijaya

To the south of the zone of Confucian influence, an all-sea route between east and west had developed by the sixth century (see Chapter 6). Merchants from south India and Sri Lanka sailed through the Strait of Malacca (between the west side of the Malay Peninsula and the northeast coast of the island of Sumatra) and into the South China Sea. A new center of power, **Srivijaya** (**sree-vih-JUH-yuh**)—Sanskrit for “Great Conquest”—dominated this new route by 683 C.E. The kingdom gained ascendancy over its rivals and assumed control of the international trade route by bringing four distinct ecological zones under its control.

The core area was the agricultural plain along the Musi River in Sumatra. The king and his clerks, judges, and tax collectors controlled this zone directly from Palembang, the capital. Control was less direct over the second zone, the upland regions of Sumatra's interior, which yielded commercially valuable forest products. Local rulers there were bound to the center by oaths of loyalty, elaborate court ceremonies, and the sharing of profits from trade. The third zone consisted of river ports that had been Srivijaya's main rivals. Srivijaya allied with neighboring sea nomads, pirates who served as a Srivijayan navy in return for a steady income, to control these. The fourth zone was a fertile “rice bowl” on the central plain of the nearby island of

## SECTION REVIEW

- Korea, Japan, and Vietnam adapted Chinese cultural and political models, including the Tang blend of Confucianism and Buddhism.
- In all three cultures, landowning and agriculture remained the principal source of wealth.
- The southern kingdom of Srivijaya was more influenced by India than by China.

Java—a region so productive, because of its volcanic soil, that it houses and feeds the majority of the population of present-day Indonesia.

The Srivijayan king, drawing upon Mahayana Buddhist conceptions, presented himself as a bodhisattva, one who had achieved enlightenment and utilized his precious insights for the betterment of his subjects. He was believed to have magical powers, controlling powerful forces of fertility associated with the rivers in flood and mediating between the spiritually potent realms of the mountains and the sea. The kings built and patronized Buddhist monasteries and schools. Though they encouraged Sanskrit learning, they had few contacts with the Mahayana Buddhist network that spread through China from the north under the Tang. After Srivijaya's decline in the eleventh century, Theravada Buddhism became the prevailing religious orientation.

## CONCLUSION

The Tang Empire put into place a solid system of travel, trade, and communications that allowed cultural and economic influences to move quickly from Central Asia to Japan. Diversity within the empire produced great wealth and new ideas. But tensions among rival groups weakened the political structure and led to great violence and misery.

The post-Tang fragmentation permitted regional cultures to emerge. They experimented with and often improved on Tang military, architectural, and scientific technologies. In northern and Central Asia, these refinements included state ideologies based on Buddhism, bureaucratic practices based on Chinese traditions, and military techniques combining nomadic horsemanship and strategies with Chinese armaments and weapons. In Song China, the spread of Tang technological knowledge resulted in the privatization of commerce, major advances in technology and industry, increased productivity in agriculture, and deeper exploration of ideas relating to time, cosmology, and mathematics.

The brilliant achievements of the Song period came from mutually reinforcing developments in economy and technology. Avoiding the Tang's distortion of trade relations and inhibition of innovation and competition, the Song economy, though much smaller than its predecessor, showed great productivity, circulating goods and money throughout East Asia and stimulating the economies of neighbors.

Korea, Japan, and Vietnam developed distinct social, economic, and political systems. Buddhism became the preferred religion in all three regions, but Chinese influences, largely deriving from a universal esteem for Confucian thought and writings, put down deep roots. All of these societies made advances in agricultural technology and productivity and raised their literacy rates as printing spread. In terms of industrial specialization, Song China dominated military technology and engineering, Japan developed advanced techniques in steel making, and Korea excelled in textiles and agriculture.

In the absence of a land border with China, Japan retained greater political independence than Korea and Vietnam. The culture of its imperial center reached a high level of perfection, but the political system was ultimately based on a warrior aristocracy. Farther to the south, the maritime kingdom of Srivijaya remained largely immune to Chinese influence.

## KEY TERMS

**Grand Canal** p. 284

**Li Shimin** p. 284

**Tang Empire** p. 284

**tributary system** p. 287

**Song Empire** p. 292

**junk** p. 293

**gunpowder** p. 293

**neo-Confucianism** p. 293

**Zen** p. 294

**movable type** p. 295

**shamanism** p. 298

**Koryo** p. 299

**Fujiwara** p. 301

**Kamakura**

**Shogunate** p. 301

**Champa rice** p. 302

**Srivijaya** p. 302

## EBOOK AND WEBSITE RESOURCES



### Primary Source

Memorial on Buddhism



### Interactive Maps

**Map 10.1** The Tang Empire in Inner and Eastern Asia, 750

**Map 10.2** Liao and Song Empires, ca. 1100

**Map 10.3** Jin and Southern Song Empires, ca. 1200

**Plus flashcards, practice quizzes, and more. Go to:**  
[www.cengage.com/history/bulletearthpeople5e](http://www.cengage.com/history/bulletearthpeople5e)

## SUGGESTED READING

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## NOTES

1. *Master Tung's Western Chamber Romance*, trans. Li-li Ch'en (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 22, 42–43, 45–46.
2. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 584.
3. Quoted in David Lattimore, “Allusion in T'ang Poetry,” in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and David Twitchett (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 436.
4. Quoted at “Women's Early Music, Art, Poetry,” <http://music.acu.edu/www/iawm/pages/reference/tzusongs.html>.
5. Quoted in Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 221–222.
6. Quoted in Ivan Morris, trans., *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), section 1.

## AP\* REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 10

- Under the leadership of the Tang rulers,
  - the spread of Buddhism was encouraged.
  - China banned trade with all outsiders.
  - female footbinding began.
  - the practice of Confucian teachings was banned.
- One reason the Tang rulers expanded their empire into Inner Asia was
  - to create a highly centralized state based on control of trade.
  - that the founders were of Turkic extraction and shared common traits with the people of the region.
  - to seek allies in a war against the Han Chinese for control of China.
  - that they needed to increase the amount of tribute received to pay for the public works they commissioned.
- As Buddhism began to spread in Tang China,
  - the Tang rulers forbade Chinese men to become monks.
  - Legalist scholars began to convert to the new faith because they viewed it as being more ethical than Taoism.
  - Mahayana Buddhism became the predominant form of Buddhism in China because of its tolerance of local custom.
  - Buddhist monasteries were forced to pay larger amounts of tribute because of the wealth they received from their followers.
- During the Tang
  - countries in East and Southeast Asia became tributary states in exchange for trading rights or strategic alliances.
  - corruption cost the government vast amounts of wealth that was derived from trade.
  - nomadic incursions stopped because the nomads were rewarded with jobs operating and supplying caravans.
  - Tibet became a major partner in developing improved trade with Central Asia.
- Serious challenge to Tang rule in the western portion of China came from the
  - Persians.
  - Uighurs.
  - Kazaks.
  - Mughals.
- Which of the following is true of the collapse of the Tang?
  - Military revolts and tax collection issues that they could not control brought down the Tang rulers.
  - The last of the Tang emperors was assassinated by a Tibetan monk and, with no successor, the Tang collapsed.
  - Tangut leaders proclaimed that they held the “Mandate of Heaven” and called for an end to the dynasty.
  - The empire was plagued with drought and famine, which caused it to collapse.
- The Song Empire was able to take control of China following the Tang, but
  - it needed the aid of the Annamese people to the south.
  - Theravada Buddhism had to be legalized.
  - it lost vast amounts of territory to the Liao and the Tangut Empires.
  - it expanded west into Sogdiana.
- The Song developed \_\_\_\_\_ as a weapon of war but not in the same way that the West would use it.
  - armored ships
  - gunpowder
  - the crossbow
  - cannon
- Song and later versions of Confucian thought are known as
  - Zen.
  - ancestor veneration.
  - neo-Confucianism.
  - filial piety.

10. During the 1100s, spurred by prosperity, China's population rose above 100 million people. One consequence of the population growth was
- (A) urban crowding.
  - (B) widespread famine.
  - (C) rebellion over food price increases.
  - (D) wide-ranging price controls on food and housing.
11. Traditionally, in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam,
- (A) the culture was based on Indian traits.
  - (B) government offices went to the noble families.
  - (C) Buddhism was the state religion.
  - (D) written language developed independently from other parts of Asia.
12. Like Japan, Korea's earliest history
- (A) is based solely on creation myths.
  - (B) is well documented in written court records.
  - (C) comes from Chinese records.
  - (D) is based on epic poetry.
13. During the Heian period of Japan, the capital city was
- (A) Tokyo.
  - (B) Edo.
  - (C) Kyoto.
  - (D) Kamakura.
14. During the period of the Kamakura Shogunate, a new class appeared in Japan. This was the
- (A) slave class.
  - (B) merchant class.
  - (C) samurai, or warrior, class.
  - (D) priestly class.
15. Vietnam, Korea, and Japan all adopted forms of Confucian government; however, none of them adopted \_\_\_\_\_ from China.
- (A) the practice of footbinding
  - (B) rice farming as the principal form of agriculture
  - (C) a written language
  - (D) clothing styles