

Brief History of China

- Prehistory
 - Mythical Era
 - Ancient Era
 - Imperial Era
 - Modern Era
- 

Introduction



- Chinese civilization originated in various city-states along the Yellow River Valley in the Neolithic era
- A history of 4700 years since Yellow Emperor during the period of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors; the written history of China begins with Shang Dynasty 3600 years ago when turtle shells with ancient Chinese writing were carbon dated in 1500BC



Prehistory



Peking Man

- Paleolithic
 - China was inhabited by Homo erectus more than 1 million years ago
 - The archaeological site of Xihoudu site in Shanxi Province is the earliest recorded of use of fire by Homo erectus 1.27 million years ago
 - The excavations at Yuanmou and later Lantian show early habitation
 - The most specimen of Homo erectus found in China is the so-called Peking Man discovered in 1965

Prehistory (cont.)



Stone Tools

- Neolithic
 - The Neolithic age traced back to 10,000 BC
 - Early evidence for proto-Chinese millet agriculture is carbon-dated to about 7,000 BC
 - Population was increased due to agriculture, the ability to store and redistribute crops and to support specialist craftsmen and administrators
 - In late Neolithic times, the Yellow River valley began to establish itself as a culture center, and the first villages were founded
 - Early history of China is complicated by the lack of a written language during this period
 - At Damaidi site in Ningxia, 3172 cliff carvings dating to 6000-5000 BC have been discovered “featuring 8453 individual characters such as the sun, moon, stars, gods and scenes of hunting or grazing”; these pictographs are reputed to be similar to the earliest characters confirmed to be written Chinese

Mythical Era



Nuwa (goddess)



Yellow Emperor

- The Three Sovereigns

- Sometimes known as the Three August Ones, were said to be god-kings or demigods
- Used their magical powers to improve the lives of their people
- In *Records of the Grand Historian*, it states that they were “the Heavenly Sovereign”, “the Earthly Sovereign” and “the Human Sovereign”
- In *Chunqiu Yundou Shu* and *Chunqiu Yuanming Bao*, they were identified as “Fuxi”, “Nuwa” and “Shennong”

- Five Emperors

- They were legendary, morally perfect sage-kings
- According to *Records of the Grand Historian*, they were “the Yellow Emperor”, “Zhuangxi”, “Emperor Ku”, “Emperor Yao”, and “Emperor Shun”
- The *Songs of Chu* identifies the Five Emperors as “Shaohao (east)”, “Zhuangxi (north)”, “Yellow Emperor (center)”, “Shennong (west)” and “Fuxi (south)”

Ancient Era

- Xia Dynasty (2100 – 1600 BC)
 - The first dynasty to be described in ancient historical records such as *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Bamboo Annals*
 - The Bamboo Annals date the founding of the Xia Dynasty to 4200 years ago
 - Founded when Shun abdicated the throne in favor of his minister Yu, whom Shun viewed as the perfect civil servant
 - Yu was greatly praised by his people for eliminating flooding by organizing the building of canals in all the major rivers
 - Most archaeologists connect the Xia to excavations at Erlitou in central Henan province, where a bronze smelter from around 2000 BC was unearthed
 - Early markings from this period found on pottery and shells are thought to be ancestors of modern Chinese characters with few clear records matching the Shang oracle bones or the Zhou bronze vessel writings
 - The Xia era remains poorly understood.

Ancient Era



Bronze

- Shang Dynasty (1600 – 1046 BC)
 - The earliest discovered written record of China's past dates, takes the form of inscriptions of divination records on the bones or shells of animals, called oracle bones
 - Shang Dynasty is divided into two sets
 - The First set, from the earlier Shang period (1600-1300 BC), comes from sources at Erligang, Zhengzhou and Shangcheng
 - The Second set, from the later Shang or Yin period, consists of a large body of oracle bone writings
 - Fully developed system of writing as attested on bronze inscriptions, oracle bones, and a small number of other writings on pottery, jade and other stones, horn, etc
 - Bronze casting and pottery also advanced in Shang Culture
 - Shang Zhou, the last Shang king, committed suicide after his army was defeated by the Zhou people

Ancient Era

Western
Zhou
Dynasty
musical
bronze bell



- Zhou Dynasty (1027 – 221 BC, Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou Dynasties)
- Western Zhou Dynasty
 - Longest dynasty in Chinese history
 - By the end of the 2nd millennium BC, the Zhou Dynasty began to emerge in the Yellow River valley, overrunning the Shang
 - The Zhou appeared to have begun their rule under a semi-feudal system
 - The ruler of the Zhou, King Wu, with the assistance of his brother, the Duke of Zhou, as regent managed to defeat the Shang at the Battle of Muye
 - The king of Zhou at this time invoked the concept of the Mandate of Heaven to legitimize his rule, a concept that would be influential for almost every successive dynasty
 - Initially moved the capital west to an area near modern Xi'an, near the Yellow River, but they would preside over a series of expansions into Yangtze River valley
 - First of many population migrations from north to south in Chinese history

Ancient Era

Confucius



Chinese pu
vessel with
interlaced
dragon
design



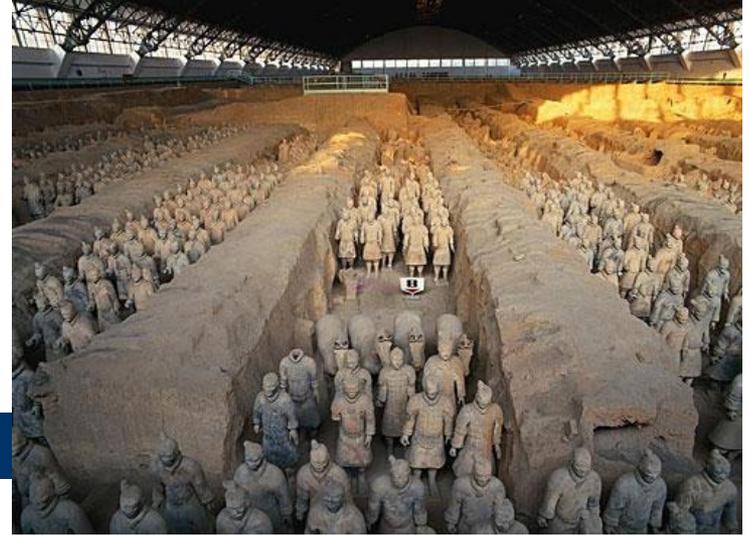
- Spring and Autumn Period (from the second half of the 8th century BC to the first half of the 5th century BC)
 - First half of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty
 - Local military leaders used by the Zhou began to assert their power and vie for hegemony, which marks the second large phase of the Zhou Dynasty: the Eastern Zhou
 - In each of the hundreds of states that eventually arose, local strongmen held most of the political power and continued their subservience to the Zhou kings in name only. Local leaders started using royal titles for themselves
 - The Hundred Schools of Thought of Chinese philosophy blossomed during this period
 - Influential intellectual movements as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and Mohism were founded, partly in response to the changing political world
 - This period is marked by a falling apart of the central Zhou power. China now consists of hundreds of states, some only as large as a village with a fort

Ancient Era



- Warring States Period (from 5th century BC to 221 BC)
 - After further political consolidation following the Spring and Autumn Period, seven prominent states remained by the end of 5th century BC
 - The years in which these few states battled each other are known as the Warring States Period
 - Zhou king remained nominal until 256 BC, he was largely a figurehead and held little real power
 - As neighboring territories of these warring states were annexed, they were governed under the new local administrative system of commandery and prefecture
 - The final expansion in this period began during the reign of Ying Zheng, the king of Qin

Imperial Era



The Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang

- Qin Dynasty (221 BC – 206 BC)
 - The unification of China in 221 BC under the First Emperor Qin Shi Huang marked the beginning of Imperial China
 - Though the unified reign of the Qin Emperor lasted only 12 years, he managed to subdue great parts of what constitutes the core of the Han Chinese homeland and unite them under a tightly centralized legalist government seated at Xianyang (close to modern Xi'an)
 - The doctrine of legalism that guided the Qin emphasized strict adherence of a legal code and the absolute power of the emperor
 - A lavish tomb for the emperor, complete with a **Terracotta Army**, was built near the capital Xianyang (picture above)

Imperial Era

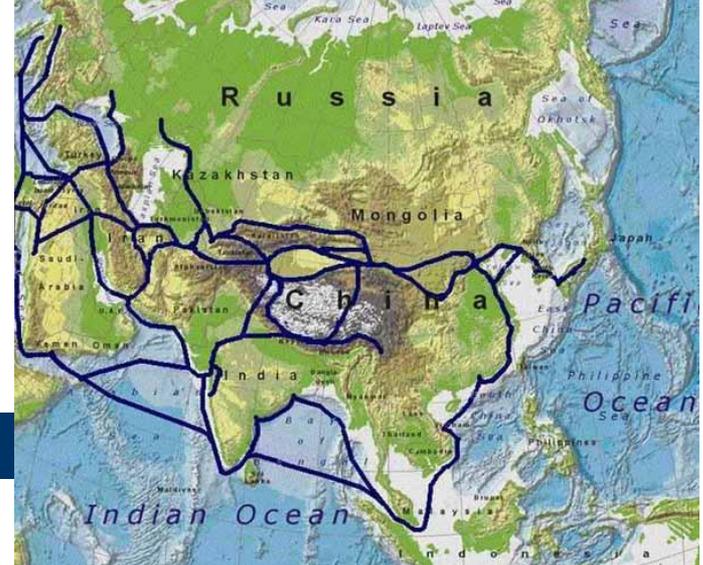


The Great Wall

- Qin Dynasty (cont.)
 - The Qin presided over the brutal silencing of political opposition, including the event known as the burning and burying the scholars
 - Well known for beginning **the Great Wall** of China, which was later augmented and enhanced during the Ming Dynasty
 - A number of public works projects, including canals and bridges, were also undertaken to consolidate and strengthen imperial rule
 - The other major contributions of the Qin include the concept of a centralized government, the unification of the legal code, written language, measurement and currency of China after the tribulations of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods

Imperial Era

Silk Road



- Han Dynasty (206 BC -220 AD, Western Han, Xin and Eastern Han Dynasties)
 - The first dynasty to embrace the philosophy of Confucianism, which became the ideological underpinning of all regimes until the end of imperial China
 - China made great advances in many areas of the arts and sciences
 - Emperor Wu consolidated and extended the Chinese empire by pushing back the Huns into the steppes of modern Inner Mongolia. This enabled the first opening of trading connections between China and the West, the Silk Road
 - In 9 AD, the usurper Wang Mang founded the short-lived Xin Dynasty and started an extensive program of land and economic reforms. However, the programs were never supported by the land-holding families. The instability brought chaos and uprisings

Imperial Era

Paper making



- Han Dynasty (cont.)

- Emperor Guangu reinstated the Han Dynasty with the support of land holding and merchant families. This new era is Eastern Han Dynasty
- One of the greatest Chinese inventions, **paper**, dates from the Han Dynasty, largely attributed to the court eunuch Cai Lun
- Han power declined again amidst land acquisitions, invasions and feuding between consort clans and eunuchs
- The Yellow Turban Rebellion broke out in 184, ushering in an era of warlords
- In the ensuing turmoil, three states tried to gain predominance in the period of the Three Kingdoms. This time period has been greatly romanticized in works such as Romance of the Three Kingdoms

Imperial Era

Map of the
Three
Kingdoms



- The Three Kingdoms (220 – 280)
 - The three kingdoms were Wei, Shu and Wu
 - CaoCao died and in the tenth month his son Cao Pi forced Emperor Xian to abdicate, thus ending the Han Dynasty. He named his state Wei and made himself emperor at Luoyang
 - In 221, Liu Bei named himself Emperor of Han, in a bid to restore the fallen Han Dynasty
 - Wei bestowed on Sun Quan the title of King of Wu
 - Dominion of the north completely belonged to Wei, whilst Shu occupied the southwest and Wu the central south and east
 - The capital Chengdu of Shu fell due to the strategic invasion of Wei, the emperor Liu Shan thus surrendered
 - Wei Dynasty was overthrown by Sima Yan and then Jin Dynasty was then established
 - Sima Yan launched five simultaneous offensives along the yanzi River. Under the strain of such an enormous attack, the Wu forces collapsed in 280

Imperial Era

Jar of the
Western
Jin with
Buddhist
figures



- Jin Dynasty (265 – 420)
- Western Jin Dynasty (265 – 316)
 - Founded by the Sima family
 - Could not contain the invasion and uprising of nomadic people after the devastating War of the Eight Princes
 - Capital was Luoyang until 311 when Emperor Huai was captured by the forces of Han Zhao
- Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 – 420)
 - Militaristic authorities and crises plagued the Eastern Jin
 - Survived the rebellions of Wang Dun and Su Jun
 - Battle of Fei turned out to be a victory under a short-lived cooperation of Huan Chong usurped and changed the name of the Dynasty to Chu
 - Abdication of Emperor Gong in 420 ushered in the Liu Song Dynasty and the Southern Dynasties
 - Meanwhile North China was ruled by the Sixteen Kingdoms, many of which founded by the Wu Hu, the non-Han Chinese ethnicities. The conquest of the Northern Liang in 439 ushered in the Northern Dynasties

Imperial Era

- Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 – 589)
 - Signaled by the collapse of East Jin Dynasty in 420, China entered the era of the Southern and Northern Dynasties
 - The Han people managed to survive the military attacks from nomadic tribes of the north and their civilization continued to thrive
 - In Southern China, fierce debates about whether Buddhism should be allowed to exist were held frequently by the royal court and nobles
 - Near the end of the Southern and Northern Dynasties era, both Buddhist and Taoist followers compromised and became more tolerant of each other
 - Sui annexed the last Southern Dynasty in 589



A limestone statue of the Bodhisattva from Northern Qi Dynasty in 570

Imperial Era



The Grand Canal

- Sui Dynasty (581 – 618)
 - Managed to reunite the country in 589 after nearly four centuries of political fragmentation
 - Brought China together again and set up many institutions that were to be adopted by their successors, the Tang
 - Like the Qin, however, the Sui overused their resources and collapsed
 - The Sui Dynasty's early demise was attributed to the government's tyrannical demands on the people, who bore the crushing burden of taxes and compulsory labor
 - Their resources were overstrained in the completion of **the Grand Canal**, a monumental engineering feat
 - Undertaking of other construction projects, including reconstruction of **the Great Wall**
 - Weakened by costly and disastrous military campaigns against Goguryeo which ended with defeat of Sui, the dynasty disintegrated through a combination of popular revolts, disloyalty and assassination

Imperial Era

A rounded ceramic plate with “three colors” glaze design in the 8th century



- Tang Dynasty (618 – 907)
 - A new age of prosperity and innovations in arts and technology
 - Buddhism had gradually been established in China and became the predominant religion, which was adopted by the imperial family and many of the common people
 - Capital Chang’an is thought to have been the world’s largest city at the time
 - Referred to as the most prosperous periods of Chinese history
 - Kept the trade routes open to the west and south and there was extensive trade with distant foreign countries and many foreign merchants settled in China
 - Lucrative trade routes along **the Silk Road**
 - Maintained a civil service system by drafting officials through standardized examinations and recommendations to office
 - Greatest age for Chinese poetry; two of China’s most famous historical poets, Du Fu and Li Bai, belonged to this age

Imperial Era

Empress
Wu Zetian



- Tang Dynasty (cont.)
 - Introduced a new system into the Chinese government, called “Equal Field System” giving families land grants from the Emperor based on their needs, not their wealth
 - The Dynasty was interrupted briefly by the second Zhou Dynasty when Empress Wu Zetian seized the throne, becoming the first and only Chinese empress regnant ruling in her own right
 - From about 860, the Tang Dynasty began to decline due to a series of rebellions within China including An Shi Rebellion
 - One of the warlords, Huang Chao, captured Guangzhou in 879, killing most of the 200,000 inhabitants
 - In late 880 Luoyang surrendered to him and on January 5, 881 he conquered Chang’an
 - Emperor Xizhong fled to Chengdu and Huang established a new temporary regime, which was eventually destroyed by Tang forces. However, another time of political chaos followed

Imperial Era



- Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907 – 960)
 - Political disunity between the Tang and the Song
 - In the end of they Tang Dynasty, the imperial government granted increased powers to the jiedushi, the regional military governors. The Huang Chao Rebellion weakened imperial government's authority.
 - By the early 10th century the jiedushi, who commanded de facto independence, were not subject to the authority of the imperial government. Thus the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms ensued
 - China was in all respects a multi-state system, five regimes succeeded one another rapidly in control of the old Imperial heartland in northern China
 - Ten more stable regimes occupied sections of southern and western China

Imperial Era



Printing

- Song Dynasty (960 – 1279)
- Northern Song (960 – 1127)
 - Established its capital in Kaifeng, starting a period of economic prosperity
 - Considered to be classical China's high point in science and technology
 - The spread of literature and knowledge was enhanced by the earlier innovation of the **woodblock printing** and the 11th century innovation of **movable type printing**
 - Court intrigue with the political rivals of the Reformers and Conservatives, led by the chancellors Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, respectively
 - The Jurchen, a subject tribe within the Liao empire, broke the alliance with the Song and launched an invasion into Song territory in 1125 and captured the capital Kaifeng; the remaining Song forces fled south of the Yangtze River and established the Song Dynasty's new capital at Lin'an

Imperial Era

A trebuchet
used to launch
the earliest type
of explosive
bombs



- Southern Song (1127 -1279)
 - Court retreated south of the Yangtze River and established their capital at Lin'an (now Hangzhou)
 - Contained 60 percent of China's population and the most productive agricultural land
 - Bolstered naval strength to defend its water and land borders and to conduct maritime missions abroad
 - Developed revolutionary new military technology augmented by the use of **gunpowder**
 - The Song government confiscated portions of land owned by the landed gentry in order to raise revenue for naval projects, an act which caused dissension and loss of loyalty amongst leading members of the Song society
 - In the Battle of Yanmen on the Pearl River Delta in 1279, the Yuan army crushed the Song resistance

Kublai
Khan



Imperial Era

- Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368)
 - A ruling dynasty founded by the Mongol leader Kublai Khan, who ruled most of present-day China, all of modern Mongolia and its surrounding areas, lasting officially from 1271 to 1368
 - First non-Han dynasty with capital in Dadu, “Great Capital” (now Beijing)
 - Kublai Khan tried to seek support from the populace; many reforms were made during his reign
 - He began to serve as a true emperor, reforming much of China and its institutions, a process that would take decades to complete. He consolidated his rule by centralizing the government making himself an absolute monarch
 - He issued paper banknotes known as Chao in 1273; the Yuan bureaucrats made paper bills from the mulberry bark paper. First dynasty used paper currency as the predominant circulating medium
 - Succession was a problem for the Yuan Dynasty, later causing much strife and internal struggle

Imperial Era

The Forbidden City,
the official imperial
household of the
Ming and Qing
dynasties



- Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644)
 - Throughout a short-lived Yuan Dynasty, there was strong sentiment, among the populace, against the rule of the foreigners, which finally led to peasant revolts
 - The Mongolians were pushed back to the steppes and replaced by the Ming Dynasty
 - Urbanization increased as the population grew and as the division of labor grew more complex
 - Despite the xenophobia and intellectual introspection characteristic of the increasingly popular new school of neo-Confucianism, China under the early Ming Dynasty was not isolated.
 - Foreign trade and other contracts with the outside world, particularly Japan, increased considerably
 - Chinese merchants explored all of the Indian Ocean, reaching East Africa with the voyages of Zheng He
 - Perhaps because of the Emperor's background as a peasant, the Ming economic system emphasized agriculture

Imperial Era



- Ming Dynasty (cont.)
 - Last construction on **the Great Wall** was undertaken to protect China from foreign invasions
 - Land estates were confiscated by the government, fragmented, and rented out
 - Private slavery was forbidden; consequently, independent peasant landholders predominated in Chinese
 - The dynasty had a strong and complex central government that unified and controlled the empire
 - The emperor's role became more autocratic although Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang necessarily continued to use what he called the "Grand Secretaries" to assist with the immense paperwork of the bureaucracy.
 - It was this same bureaucracy that later prevented the Ming government from being able to adapt to changes in society and eventually led to its decline.

Imperial Era

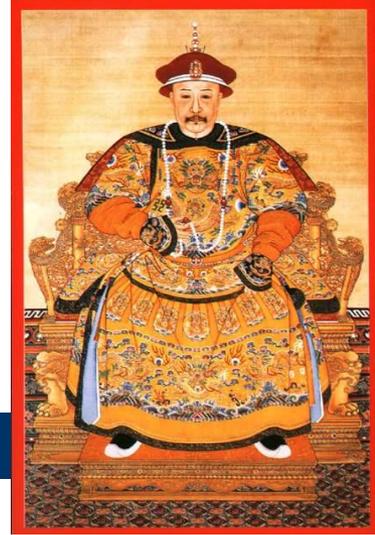
Wanli Emperor
(1572 – 1620)



- Ming Dynasty (cont.)
 - China became involved in a new global trade known as the Columbian Exchange
 - Trade with European powers and the Japanese brought in massive amounts of silver, which then replaced copper and paper banknotes
 - During last decades of the Ming, the flow of silver into China was greatly diminished, thereby undermining state revenues and indeed the entire Ming economy
 - The damage of the economy was compounded by the effects on agriculture of the incipient Little Ice Age, natural calamities, crop failure and sudden epidemics
 - The financial drain of the Imjin War in Korea against the Japanese caused fiscal problem during Wanli Emperor
 - The ensuing breakdown of authority and people's livelihoods allowed rebel leaders to challenge Ming authority
 - In 1638, the Manchu defeated and conquered Ming China's traditional ally Joseon with an army of 100,000 troops

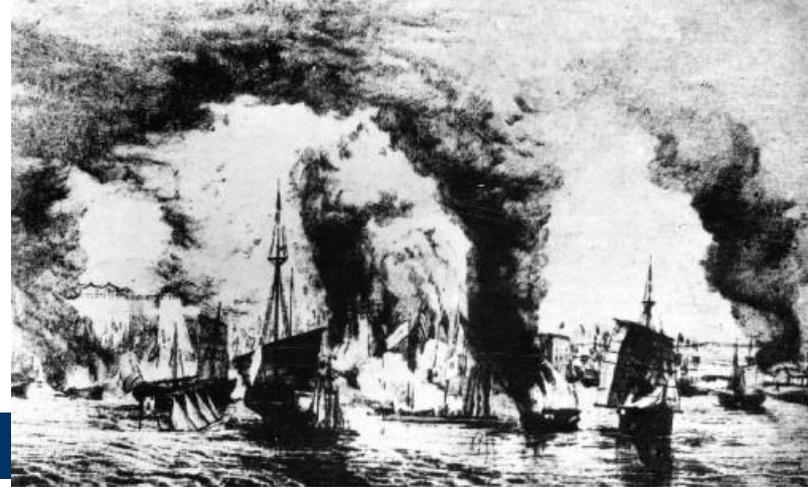
Emperor

Imperial Era



- Qing Dynasty (1644 -1911)
 - Founded after the defeat of the Ming, the last Han Chinese dynasty, by the Manchus
 - The Manchus enforced a ‘queue order’ forcing the Han Chinese to adopt the Manchu queue hairstyle and clothing
 - Set up the “Eight Banners” system in an attempt to avoid being assimilated into Chinese society; the “Eight Banners” were military institutions
 - Banner membership was to be based on traditional Manchu skills such as archery, horsemanship and frugality. Bannermen were given economic and legal privileges in Chinese cities
 - Over the next half century, the Qing consolidated control of some areas originally under the Ming; they also stretched their sphere of influence over Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia

Imperial Era



Taiping Rebellion

- Qing Dynasty (cont.)
 - In the nineteenth century, Qing control weakened
 - Britain's desire to continue its opium trade with China collided with imperial edicts prohibiting the addictive drug
 - First Opium War erupted in 1840
 - Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanjing
 - A large rebellion, the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) involved around a third of China falling under control of the Taiping Tianguo, a quasi-Christian religious movement. Taipings finally crushed after 14 years by the Third Battle of Nanking in 1864
 - More costly rebellions in terms of human lives and economics followed with the Punti-Hakka Clan Wars, Nien Rebellion, Muslim Rebellion, Panthay Rebellion and the Boxer Rebellion
 - In many ways, the rebellions and the unequal treaties the Qing was forced to sign with the imperialist powers are symptomatic of the Qing's inability to deal with the new challenges of the 19th century

Imperial Era

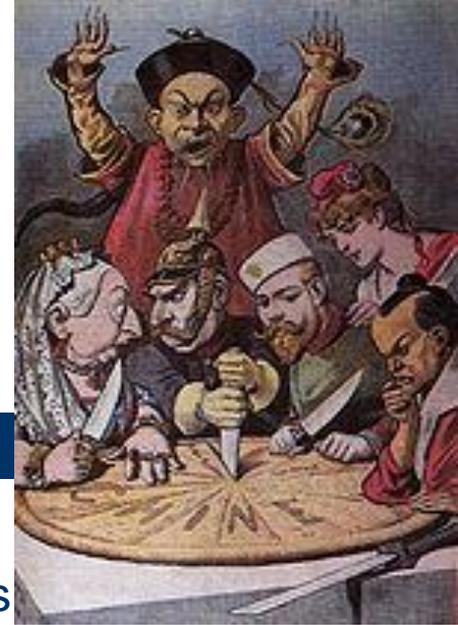
Empress
Dowager
Cixi



- Qing Dynasty (cont.)
 - By the 1860s, the Qing Dynasty had put down the rebellions at enormous cost and loss of life
 - This undermined the credibility of the Qing regime and spearheaded by local initiatives by provincial leaders and entry, contributed to the rise of warlordism
 - The Qing Dynasty under the Emperor Guangxu proceeded to deal with the problem of modernization through the Self-Strengthening Movement
 - The Empress Dowager, with the help of the conservatives, initiated a military coup, effectively removed the young Emperor from power, and overturned most of the more radical reforms
 - Official corruption, cynicism, and imperial family quarrels made most of the military reforms useless
 - The Qing’s “New Armies” were soundly defeated in the Sino-French War (1883-1885) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)

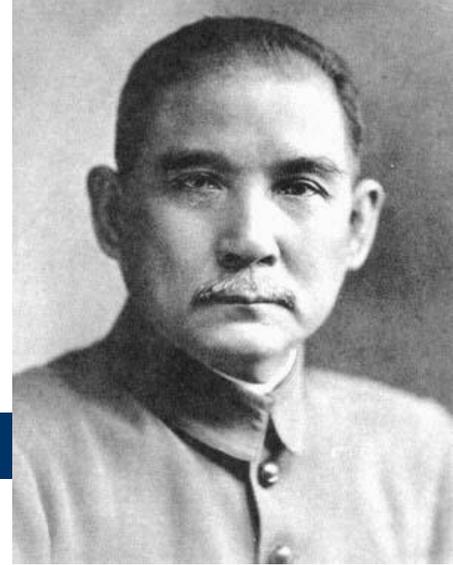
Imperial Era

Famous
French political
cartoon from
the late 1890



- Qing Dynasty (cont.)
 - The Boxer Rebellion threatened northern China. This anti-imperialist movement that sought to return China to old ways
 - The Eight-Nation Alliance invaded China
 - Mass civil disorder had begun and continuously grown
 - Both the Empress Dowager Cixi and the Guangxu emperor died in 1908, leaving a relatively powerless and unstable central authority
 - Zaifeng created the “Imperial Family Cabinet”, a ruling council of the Imperial Government in 1911, which brought a wide range of negative opinions from senior officials
 - The Wuchang Uprising succeeded in October 10, 1911 and was followed by a proclamation of a separate central government, the Republic of China
 - The Wing government brought an unwilling Yuan Shikai back to military power, taking control of his Beiyang Army with initial goal of crushing the revolutionaries

Sun Yat-sen



Imperial Era

- Qing Dynasty (cont.)
 - After taking the position of Prime Minister and creating his own cabinet, Yuan went to ask for removal of Zaifeng from the regency
 - Yuan Shikai then dominated Qing politics
 - Sun Yat-sen's government wanted a Republican constitutional reform
 - With a goal of forming a republic, Sun Yat-sen allowed Yuan to step into the position of President of the Republic. In 1912, after rounds of negotiations, Empress Dowager issued the Imperial Edict bringing about the abdication of the child emperor
 - The collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 brought an end to over 2,000 years of imperial China and began an extended period of instability of warlord factionalism

Long March

Modern Era



- Republic of China (1912 – 1949)
 - Slavery in China was abolished in 1910
 - In 1919, the May Fourth Movement began as a response to the insult imposed on China by the Treaty of Versailles ending World War I
 - In the 1920, Sun Yat-Sen established a revolutionary base in south China and set out to unite the fragmented nation
 - With Soviet assistance, he entered into an alliance with the fledgling Communist Party of China (CPC)
 - The CPC forces embarked on the Long March across China's most desolate terrain to the northwest
 - During the Long March, the communists reorganized under a new leader, Mao Zedong

Modern Era

Mao Zedong



- Republic of China (cont.)
 - Chiang Kai-shek seized control of the Kuaomingtang (Nationalist Party or KMT)
 - The bitter struggle between the KMT and the CPC continued, openly or clandestinely, through the 14-year long Japanese invaders in 1937, during the Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945) portion of World War II
 - The war between the two parties resumed following the Japanese defeat in 1945
 - In 1949, the CPC occupied most of the country
 - Also in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek fled with the remnants of his government to Taiwan

Modern Era



- People's Republic of China (1949 – present)
 - Founded since October 1, 1949 after a near complete victory by the Communist Party of China in the Chinese Civil War
 - Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China from atop Tiananmen
- Socialist transformation under Mao Zedong (1949 – 1976)
 - Mao laid heavy emphasis on class struggle and theoretical work
 - In 1953 began various campaigns to suppress former landlords and capitalists. Foreign investment was largely wiped out
 - Mao believed that socialism would eventually triumph over all other ideologies
 - Mao began the Cultural Revolution in May 1966. Red Guards terrorized the streets as many ordinary citizens were deemed counter-revolutionaries. Education and public transportation came to a nearly complete halt

Modern Era

Deng Xiaoping



- Rise of Deng Xiaoping and economic reform (1976 – 1989)
 - At the 3rd Plenum of the 11th CPC Congress, Deng embarked China on the road to Economic Reforms and Openness, policies that began with the de-collectivization of the countryside, followed with industrial reforms aimed at decentralizing government controls in the industrial sector
 - Deng championed the idea of Special Economic Zones, areas where foreign investment would be allowed to pour in without strict government restraint and regulations
 - Supporters of the economic reforms point to the rapid development of the consumer and export sectors of the economy
 - Creation of an urban middle class that now constitutes 15% of the population, higher living standards and a much wider range of personal rights and freedoms for average Chinese as evidence of the success of the reforms

Modern Era



- Economic growth under the third generation (1989-2002)
 - After Deng Xiaoping retired from public view, the third generation of leadership led by Jiang Zemin, who was hailed as its “core”
 - Jiang’s macroeconomic reforms furthered Deng’s vision for “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”
 - The **Three Gorges Dam** was built, attracting supporters and widespread criticism
 - Two foreign colonies returned to China; Hong Kong from Britain in 1997, and Macau from Portugal in 1999

Modern Era



- 2002 – present
 - The first major crisis faced by China in the 21st century as a new generation of leaders led by Hu Jintao after assuming power was the public health crisis involving SARS
 - The political status and future of Taiwan remain uncertain
 - The assertion of the Scientific Perspective to create a Harmonious Society is the focus of the Hu-Wen administration
 - The continued economic growth of the country as well as its sporting power status has gained China the right to host the 2008 Summer Olympics
 - In May 2008, a massive earthquake registering 8.0 on the Richter scale hit Sichuan province of China