

COURSE GUIDEBOOK



From Yao to Mao: 5000 Years of Chinese History

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Part II



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5000 Years of Chinese History Part II

From Yao to Mao:

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Dr. Hammond's research focuses on the cultural and intellectual history of China in the late imperial era, from the 10th through the 18th centuries, especially the history of the Ming dynasty, from 1368 to 1644. He has published articles and translations on Chinese gardens, as well as essays on the 16th-century scholar-official Wang Shizhen. Dr. Hammond also edited *The Human Tradition in Premodern China*, a biographical reader for undergraduate students.

In 1999, he received an American Council of Learned Societies research grant to spend five months at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. In 2002–2003, he was an Affiliated Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies at Leiden, the Netherlands. In June 2003, he organized and chaired an international conference on Chinese cultural history in Leiden.

Dr. Hammond is past president of the Society for Ming Studies and has served on the Board of Directors of the Southwest Association for Asian Studies.

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From Yao to Mao: 5000 Years of Chinese History

Scope:

The 36 lectures in this course explore the history and culture of China, spanning a vast temporal and spatial domain and developing several themes to help understand this ancient and complex society. We will proceed in an essentially chronological passage through the unfolding of China's political and cultural evolution, with particular attention to important ideas and individuals and the roles they have played in shaping both China's historical past and its dynamic present.

Chinese civilization originated in the confluence of several regional Neolithic cultures nearly 5,000 years ago. Emerging from the mythological Era of Sage Emperors, such as Yao and Shun, China's historical record begins with the Shang dynasty around 1500 B.C.E. We will follow the growth of China from a small kingdom on the North China Plain to a major empire extending from the Siberian frontier to the jungles of Southeast Asia, from the Pacific coast to the Central Asian deserts.

One of our main themes will be the evolution of social and political elites and the mechanisms by which they acquired and asserted their power as rulers of China. Closely linked to this is the history of political thought in China, from shamanistic roots in prehistory through the Axial Age of Confucius and Laozi and the long process of crafting and adapting the Imperial Order over the past two millennia and more.

We will also be concerned with the ways in which the Chinese have thought and written about themselves and the world around them. Cosmological ideas about the nature of the universe, the metaphysical insights of Buddhism and religious Daoism, and the perennial mysticism of popular religion have blended and interacted throughout Chinese history in ways which have yielded both the beauties of art and the horrors of religious conflict.

Throughout these lectures, we will consider China's history as it relates to the world beyond China. For more than 2,000 years, China has been linked to the global economy, and traders and travelers have brought both the riches of the empire and tales of its splendor to the West. We will trace the increasingly close relations between China and the West from the age of the Mongol conquests in the 13th century through the rise of European imperialism in the 19th and into the present age of China's reemergence as a great world economic and political power.

By engaging with the history of China over the last five millennia, we will become familiar with one of the world's greatest civilizations and, arguably, its most persistent. Far from the popular image of China as a stagnant, unchanging

relic of a once glorious past, we will see China as a living culture that has flourished and declined, revived and returned to greatness several times over thousands of years. We will come to understand some of the key features that allowed China's political order to remain stable for more than 2,000 years and that continue to shape this country at the opening of the 21st century.

Lecture Thirteen

Han Yu and the Late Tang

Scope: The An Lushan rebellion shook the Tang to its foundation, but the dynasty survived and remained in power for another century and a half. At the end of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th, a new intellectual movement of Confucian thinkers and writers, perhaps represented best by the scholar Han Yu, began to call for a return to the ideals of good government and good writing that had characterized the first century of the Han dynasty a thousand years earlier. Blaming many of China's troubles on the baleful influences of Buddhism and religious Daoism, Han Yu and others called for a kind of cultural renaissance. Their ideas did not immediately yield fruit but set the stage for the great cultural and intellectual changes of the 11th century, which we will consider later.

Outline

- I. In the aftermath of the An Lushan rebellion, the Tang dynasty found its position weakened.
 - A. The emperors had to make deals with military leaders to ensure their support.
 1. The rebellion mainly affected the northern and central provinces.
 2. Generals in the south and southwest of the empire forced the emperor to agree to allow them to retain much of the tax revenues from their regions, thus reducing the fiscal resources for the central government.
 3. Local strongmen began to dominate the provinces, and the imperial court directly ruled only the area immediately surrounding the capital.
 - B. Buddhist monasteries also became a major concern for the rulers.
 1. Buddhism remained quite popular, and monks were often advisors at court.
 2. The great monasteries built up large holdings of land donated by pious, or clever, donors, all of which was exempt from taxation.
 3. This also led to a decrease in revenues for the state.
- II. At the end of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th, a cultural and political movement began to revive Confucian values and reduce the power and influence of Buddhism.
 - A. One of the chief figures in this movement was a man named Han Yu.
 1. Han Yu lived from 768 to 824.

2. He represented a newly emerging kind of scholar-official.
 3. He was not from the established aristocratic families that had long dominated the court.
 4. He entered government service through the examination system, rather than through personal recommendation; this career pattern would become much more common later, in the Song dynasty.
- B.** Han Yu developed a literary and political theory called *guwen*, meaning “old-style” writing.
1. He advocated simple, straightforward expository prose, in the style common during the early Han dynasty.
 2. He argued that the flowery literature that had become dominant in China undermined clear thinking and promoted false values.
 3. In such texts as his famous essay “The Origin of the Way,” he blamed Buddhism, and to some extent religious Daoism, for the problems of China’s cultural and political life.
 4. In another essay, “On the Bone of the Buddha,” he opposed plans for the emperor to pay homage to a Buddhist relic on display in the capital.
 5. He believed that a return to basic Confucian values of humanity and compassion would restore China to greatness.
- III.** The *guwen* movement pushed for political reform and a revival of the imperial state.
- A.** Han Yu and other like-minded junior officials wrote essays and memorials seeking to promote their views.
1. In some limited ways, they acted like a political faction within the government.
 2. Many of them, including Han Yu, were criticized and punished for their views.
 3. Han Yu was exiled to the south for several years but returned to the capital.
 4. The activities of this group set a standard for later Confucians in standing up for their beliefs.
 5. Although they did not succeed in becoming the dominant group, the *guwen* thinkers set the stage for major cultural and intellectual developments in the 10th century and afterwards, as we will see in later lectures.
- B.** In 845, a purge of Buddhism greatly reduced the power of monasteries.
1. This was, in part, a response to the critique of Buddhism set forth by the *guwen* school.
 2. Most monasteries were closed down, and monks and nuns were ordered to return to lay life.

3. This suppression lasted only a few years, and Buddhist monasteries resumed their activities from the 850s onward, but they never held as much land, or as much power, as they had previously.
4. By late in the 9th century, the Tang began to face serious problems again, and it entered a period of rapid decline, which ushered in an age of great changes in China; we turn to this period in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Charles Hartman, *Han Yu and the T'ang Search for Unity*.

Supplemental Reading:

Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society*.

Jo-shui Chen, *Liu Tsung-yuan and Intellectual Change in T'ang China, 773–819*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why would a particular style of writing have been seen as important in itself, rather than as merely secondary to the message contained in a literary work?
2. For Han Yu and like-minded scholar officials, criticizing the shortcomings of the emperor was a moral duty. This often resulted in exile or execution. Why would individuals have risked such punishments by speaking out?

Lecture Fourteen

Five Dynasties and the Song Founding

Scope: By the late 9th century, the Tang dynasty was weakened by corruption, the diffusion of military power, and the power conflicts of great aristocratic families. In 907, the last Tang ruler was deposed, and the empire fell into a half century of fragmentation and chronic warfare. A series of regional states rose and fell in rapid succession until, in 960, two brothers established a new dynasty called the Song. These men, Zhao Kuangyin and Zhao Kuangyi, defeated various rivals and consolidated their power over the next decade, establishing a new order that would rule China until the Mongol conquest in the later 13th century. They faced a political challenge in bringing the prolonged period of military rule after the fall of the Tang to an end and resolved the problems facing them through institutional and social innovations that fundamentally reshaped the later imperial state.

Outline

- I. The Tang dynasty fell apart at the end of the 9th century.
 - A. A combination of internal stresses tore the empire apart.
 1. Military strongmen clashed among themselves over dominance at court.
 2. Eunuchs gained increasing power over the day-to-day operations of the central government.
 3. Great aristocratic families schemed against each other for influence over the emperors.
 4. In the 880s, a civil war between rival military leaders caused major economic damage.
 5. Peasant rebellions against exploitation by desperate landlords broke out with increasing frequency and violence.
 6. Finally, the armies entered the capital and massacred the eunuchs, imposing military oversight on the last Tang emperors.
 - B. At the beginning of the 10th century, the Tang was deposed, and China fell into more than 50 years of division and warfare.
 1. This period is called the Five Dynasties, after the main states that handed power down through five decades.
 2. Many other minor kingdoms rose and fell during this time, as well.
 3. Power was held by whoever could muster adequate force to seize it.

4. Society and the economy were subject to severe stress and disruption.
- II.** In 960, this age of instability was brought to an end with the establishment of the Song dynasty.
- A.** The Zhao brothers, Kuangyin and Kuangyi, seized power in one of the Five Dynasties states and were successful in unifying the empire.
 1. Their seizure of power was essentially like all the others that had taken place over the previous 53 years.
 2. They faced a basic problem, which was how to ensure that some other general would not do to them what they had done to their emperor.
 3. They reunified China through a series of military campaigns and, by 970, controlled the entire empire.
 - B.** The Zhao brothers solved their problem with innovative policies and careful political maneuvering.
 1. The old aristocratic order, which had supported dynastic government from the Han through the Tang, had largely been destroyed in the chaos of the fall of the Tang and 50 years of chronic warfare.
 2. The Zhao brothers used a new method to recruit men of talent to serve in their administration, the Confucian examination system.
 3. Exams had been used since the Han as a minor adjunct to the main system of recruitment by recommendation.
 4. Now, the Song dynasty made the exams the mainstream of government recruitment, though other ways of entering the bureaucracy, such as the “shadow privilege” given to the sons or grandsons of officials who were already serving, also remained.
- III.** The examinations became central to the political culture of Song and later imperial China.
- A.** The examinations took place on a local and national level.
 1. At first, it was a two-level system, which later developed a middle, provincial level.
 2. Candidates sat for examinations to test their knowledge of the Confucian classical texts and their ability to write classical Chinese.
 3. Specific criteria for evaluation shifted from time to time, often involving great political controversy.
 4. Men who passed at the local level could sit for the higher exams.

5. Women, merchants and their sons, and men from small “outcast” groups were barred from the examinations, but all farmers, artisans, and members of already established elite families could take part.
- B.** The examinations created a focus for elite cultural life.
1. What John Chafee has called “examination culture” became the mainstream of the intellectual and cultural life of China’s elite.
 2. Confucianism regained its central role as the official ideology of the imperial state, with Buddhism relegated to a safely non-political status.
 3. The literate gentlemen who dominated China’s political culture were known as the *shi*, the same term used for the administrative elite in ancient times.
 4. The *shi* encompassed a range of views and interpretations about the meaning of Confucian teachings and the nature of society and the world.
 5. Debates and discussions about these issues led to the rise of diverse schools of thought and, sometimes, to political rivalries between groups of *shi* both in and out of government office.
 6. The 11th century became an age of great intellectual ferment for China, as diverse schools of thought emerged and contended for preeminence. We will explore this development in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

John W. Chafee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China*.

Supplemental Reading:

Ichisada Miyazaki, *China’s Examination Hell*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How might the military strongmen who made themselves rulers of the many small states during the Five Dynasties justify their seizures of power?
2. Why would the generals holding positions of power under the early Song dynasty have yielded to the civil authority of the new examination system officials?

Lecture Fifteen

Intellectual Ferment in the 11th Century

Scope: Perhaps the most critical development in the early Song dynasty was the expansion of the imperial civil service examination system.

Examinations based on the Confucian classical texts had been used as part of the process of recruiting men into government service since the Han period, but in the late 10th century, the Song revived the use of exams and made them central to their personnel function. Examinations became the most significant mechanism for identifying men of talent and for placing officials in the highest positions in the imperial bureaucracy. This gave intellectual issues renewed importance in elite circles, and the 11th century became a great age of debate and discussion about literature, philosophy, government, and art. We will examine several key figures in this process and explore the great controversies that shaped the period.

Outline

- I. As the examination system developed, the class of literary gentlemen, the *shi*, became the dominant elite in government and society.
 - A. The men who passed at least one level of the examinations formed the core of this elite.
 1. In the course of a regular three-year examination cycle, tens of thousands of men would sit for tests on the local level, but only a few hundred would eventually pass at the highest level and become *jinshi*, or “presented gentlemen.”
 2. Even passing only the lowest level, though, brought great prestige and exemption from certain taxes and legal obligations, for example, exemption from corporal punishment or the *corvée* labor tax.
 - B. The examination culture included also men who never passed even the lowest exams but had immersed themselves in the literary tradition by studying for the exams.
 1. Some men sat repeatedly for the entry-level exams without ever passing.
 2. Many men who failed to pass the exams still became teachers or secretaries for officials.
 3. The educated strata in Song Chinese society extended to perhaps five percent of the population.

- II. The examination culture gave rise to great debates over the nature of social and cosmic order and the proper role of the gentleman in the world.
- A. Three main streams of thought can be perceived among the literati (*shi*) in the 11th century.
1. Two of these centered on the concept of *wen*, or literary culture.
 2. These can be thought of as the “literary gentlemen” (*wenren*) and the “statecraft” thinkers (*jingshi*).
 3. The other main group was more concerned with cosmological thought.
- B. The *wenren* and *jingshi* thinkers shared a faith in the literary textual tradition as the repository of human experience and as the place to look for moral values.
1. The literary gentlemen are represented by such figures as Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and Su Shi (1037–1101).
 2. These men looked to the writings of the past for inspiration and for insight into how gentlemen of the past had acted in various circumstances.
 3. What was most important for these men was good writing, in the tradition of Han Yu in the Tang.
 4. The statecraft thinkers also looked to the writings of the past but with a more utilitarian intent.
 5. They saw the past as a kind of inventory of experience or, perhaps, a toolbox, from which precedents and examples could be drawn on which to base actions in the present.
 6. Wang Anshi and Sima Guang were both exponents of *jingshi*, though they were bitter political enemies.
 7. Wang promoted an ambitious program of government reform to strengthen the central state, while Sima advocated greater autonomy for the local elites, meaning in practice, the landowning *shi* families across the empire.
- C. The cosmological thinkers saw human society in a broader cosmic context.
1. Central to their thinking was the concept of *li*, meaning naturally occurring patterns, in contrast to the idea of *wen*, which referred to patterns produced by human action, such as writing or painting.
 2. They sought to apprehend the underlying patterns in nature and human society and to derive moral values or principles from a direct understanding of the natural order, rather than on the basis of historical experience.
 3. Such men as Shao Yong and Zhang Zai and, especially the brothers Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, represent the cosmological thinkers.

4. They emphasized the place of human activity within a cosmic system, and for them, moral values were, in effect, natural laws.
- III. As we will see in a later lecture, new challenges were emerging that would threaten the survival of the Song in the early 12th century.
- A. On the northern frontier, non-Chinese peoples were expanding their power.
 - B. Before we discuss these challenges, we will consider some of the cultural manifestations of the new ideas we have been discussing, in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours*.

Supplemental Reading:

Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer, eds., *Ordering the World*.

Questions to Consider:

1. If the literary cultural past was the repository for practical knowledge and moral values, what was the role of the *shi* as bearers of that heritage?
2. Why was there such a strong link between moral discourse and political factionalism?

Lecture Sixteen

Art and the Way

Scope: The Northern Song dynasty was also a great age of change in art. In this lecture, we will look back to the development of painting and calligraphy in earlier times and consider the emergence of landscape painting and the rise of art historical discourse in the 11th century. The changes taking place in painting reflected new ideas about the place of man in the universe, and these in turn, became manifest in the new philosophical trend of *Daoxue*, or the “Learning of the Way,” which would soon become the official version of Confucianism approved by the imperial state.

Outline

- I. Painting and calligraphy had a long history in China before the Song.
 - A. The earliest images of people or objects go back to Neolithic pottery decoration. Animal totems and geometric designs predominated.
 - B. By the Han dynasty, tomb decoration became important.
 1. Wall paintings and painted fabrics have been found with images of people and animals, both naturalistic and fantastic.
 2. There was also a desire to illustrate ideas of the afterlife.
 - C. During the period from Han through Tang, painting took on new forms and styles, and calligraphy developed as a graphic art form.
 1. With the invention of paper and less expensive techniques for silk production, paintings became cheaper to produce and more affordable to own.
 2. Paintings as illustrations of moral tales or popular stories, such as Gu Kaizhi’s *Admonitions of the River Spirit*, grew more common.
 3. In the Southern Dynasties, during the period of cultural anxiety related to the presence of Turkic-dominated states in northern China, calligraphy developed as a significant art form.
 4. Calligraphy emphasized the structural beauty of Chinese writing and posited a link between the aesthetic values of writing characters and the moral qualities of the writer.
 - D. Throughout these periods, painting and calligraphy were seen as essentially narrative and didactic, as illustrative art forms.

- II. In the 10th century, new ideas about painting and the representation of the world began to develop.
- A. Central to this was a reevaluation of the place of human activity in the universe.
 - 1. Painting and calligraphy had been seen as part of the overall realm of *wen* and had basically served to illustrate literary concepts.
 - 2. New ideas about *li*, the inherent patterns in things, caused some people to see the world in different ways.
 - 3. Northern Song landscape painting began to present human life as merely one element in a much larger natural or cosmic order.
 - 4. Monumental landscape paintings, such as Fan Kuan's *Travelers in the Mountains*, emphasized the massive physical structure of the land and placed tiny human figures in peripheral settings.
 - 5. Fan's painting reveals the natural patterns of the landscape and situates human activity in a clearly subordinate role.
 - 6. Basic compositional elements include the distant mass of mountains, more detail in the foreground, and the winding path (in Chinese, the same word, *Dao*, means "the Way") along which the travelers pass.
 - B. Landscape painting became the mainstream of Chinese graphic art.
 - 1. In the Northern Song, down to the 1120s, monumental landscape dominated, though genre paintings of daily life at court and bird-and-flower painting were also significant.
 - 2. In the Southern Song, landscapes became somewhat smaller in scale and more concerned with misty views of distant peaks, perhaps reflecting a nostalgia for the lost territories of northern China, which we will discuss in the next lecture.
 - 3. In both styles, the place of human beings is clearly subordinate to, although part of, a larger order.
- III. The concept of *li* became central to the emergence of the Learning of the Way (*Daoxue*).
- A. As we saw in the discussion of 11th-century thought, the cosmological thinkers emphasized *li* and the idea of natural principles as the basis for moral order.
 - 1. The "good" was thought of as that which was in harmony with natural principle, and that which deviated from this was evil.
 - 2. Although this kind of philosophy emphasized seeking values in the inherent patterns of nature, it did not entirely turn away from the heritage of Confucian learning.
 - B. In the 12th century, *Daoxue* ideas were developed and consolidated and became a powerful force in Chinese intellectual culture.

1. The changes in intellectual and cultural life, however, need to be seen in the context of other changes taking place in the economy and in political life.
2. We will examine the ideas of Zhu Xi, the preeminent *Daoxue* thinker of the Southern Song, in a later lecture.
3. First, we need to consider the impact of non-Chinese invaders during the course of the Song and the dynamic development of economic forces in the 11th through 13th centuries, which we will look at in the next two lectures.

Essential Reading:

Wen Fong, ed., *Beyond Representation*.

Supplemental Reading:

Amey McNair, *The Upright Brush*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Painting had been considered a craft, which was largely practiced by artisans at court until the Song dynasty. What was the connection between the changes in artistic theory and practice and the transformation of the social-political elite in the early Song?
2. Why were painting and calligraphy thought to reveal a man's character more clearly than his words?

Lecture Seventeen

Conquest States in the North

Scope: The collapse of the Tang at the beginning of the 10th century not only led to a period of division and conflict within China but also created opportunities for the rise of non-Chinese powers along the northern frontier. The Khitan people established the Liao dynasty in 907 and carried on a tense relationship with the Chinese over the next two centuries. As the Song state consolidated its power over most of China, the Liao retained control of the Sixteen Prefectures in the area near modern Beijing. The Liao became a state ruled by a non-Chinese elite but using Chinese bureaucratic systems to administer part of its territory. In the late 11th century, another northern people, the Jurchen, began to assert their power and, in an alliance with the Chinese, overthrew the Liao. They then went on to invade and conquer much of northern China, which they ruled under the Jin dynasty until the Mongols defeated them in 1234.

Outline

- I. The collapse of Tang power created the conditions for non-Chinese states to arise along the former frontier of the empire.
 - A. All along the arc from Tibet to Manchuria, local peoples set up their own states.
 1. The Tibetan empire, which had challenged Tang power in Central Asia in the 8th and 9th centuries, continued to control the high plateau.
 2. A Uighur empire spread across the deserts and oases of the Tarim Basin.
 3. Mongol tribes were the notable exception to this period of political development but would soon surpass their neighbors.
 4. In the northeast, the Khitan were the first people to create a strong state.
 - B. The Khitan lived in the mountains and forests of what is now southern Manchuria.
 1. In 907, they set up an independent state, which they called the Liao dynasty.
 2. The first Liao leader, Abaoji, spent two decades campaigning against rival groups and against the Chinese just south of the Great Wall to build an extensive territory for his empire.

3. The Liao state was able to seize and hold the so-called Sixteen Prefectures, a strip of land south of the Great Wall with a dense population of Chinese farmers.
- II.** With the rise of the Song in China, the Liao and the Chinese developed a tense but viable relationship.
- A.** The Chinese launched major military campaigns against the Liao in 1004 and 1044.
 1. In each case, the goal was the recovery of the Sixteen Prefectures.
 2. The Liao defeated Chinese forces and negotiated treaties with the Song.
 3. These treaties compelled the Chinese to recognize the legitimacy of the Liao state and to pay annual subsidies of silk and silver to the Khitan rulers.
 4. After the second war, the subsidies were doubled, and the Chinese refrained from further efforts to overthrow Khitan power south of the Great Wall.
 - B.** The Khitan developed a system of dual administration to deal with their ethnically mixed population.
 1. Although the Sixteen Prefectures formed only a small portion of the territory of the empire, the Chinese were almost 70 percent of the population.
 2. The Khitan retained many old tribal traditions in their lands beyond the Great Wall but used Chinese administrative techniques and the Chinese language in the Sixteen Prefectures.
 3. As time passed, the Khitan elite became increasingly assimilated to Chinese culture, and the traditional warrior ethos weakened.
- III.** The Chinese sought ways to weaken the Liao and, around the beginning of the 12th century, found an ally in the Jurchen people.
- A.** The Jurchen lived in the far north of Manchuria.
 1. Some Jurchen lived in Liao territory and were subjects of the Khitan emperors, while others lived beyond the Liao frontier.
 2. The so-called “raw” Jurchen, those not under Liao rule, allied with the Chinese to overthrow the Khitan.
 3. In 1125, they swept the Liao state away.
 4. But they did not stop there and continued to invade northern China.
 - B.** The Jurchen captured much of northern China and ended the period known as the Northern Song.
 1. In 1127, they captured Kaifeng, the Song capital.
 2. They carried the Song emperor and many of the royal family away into captivity.

3. The remnants of the court had to flee south and fought for several years to survive.
4. By 1135, the Song had basically given up hope of regaining the north, and a new capital at Hangzhou became the center of the Southern Song.

IV. The Jurchen founded the Jin dynasty, which lasted until 1234.

A. Like the Liao, the Jin had a mixed population.

1. The proportion of Chinese to Jurchen was even higher than in the Khitan Liao, with the Chinese accounting for more than 90 percent of the total.
2. The Jin state, too, was a dual administration, but the Chinese dimension soon became dominant.

B. Although relations were always tense, the border between Jin and Song was more stable than the Song-Liao frontier had been.

1. After the campaigns of the 1120s and 1130s, the military situation settled down.
2. While the “recovery of the north” remained a powerful idea in political rhetoric and literati art, no real efforts were made to reconquer territory.

C. The Jin empire was essentially Chinese in its society and culture.

1. The farming population was largely unaffected by the conquerors.
2. Jin literary culture continued many of the trends of the Northern Song, preserving, however, the leading role of the *wenren*, while *Daoxue* became increasingly important in the South.
3. During the 12th century, the Southern Song underwent great economic development, which had serious implications for politics and culture; we will take up this topic in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Morris Rossabi, ed., *China among Equals*.

Supplemental Reading:

Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Stephen H. West, eds., *China under Jurchen Rule*.

Questions to Consider:

1. The Chinese had always thought of themselves as the center of civilization. How did they deal with having to accept the Khitan and Jurchen as equal partners in treaties?
2. Why did the Khitan and Jurchen elites adopt Chinese surnames and other cultural practices, even as they tried to maintain their original cultural identities?

Lecture Eighteen

Economy and Society in Southern Song

Scope: After the loss of north China to the Jurchen in 1127, the Song court moved to the city of Hangzhou. The Southern Song survived until the Mongol conquest of the 1270s. During this century and a half, there was tremendous growth and development in China's economy, with a significant expansion in domestic and international, particularly maritime, trade, and with important technological innovations that enhanced production in both agriculture and industry. The great ceramic center at Jingdezhen became one of the first true industrial cities in history, with massive production lines and warehouses. A merchant class began to expand and compete for social status with the more traditional literati elite, which was based on agricultural wealth. Consumer goods proliferated as networks of specialized production and long-distance trade created a more truly national market.

Outline

- I. The Southern Song stabilized by the mid-1130s with a new capital at Hangzhou.
 - A. The Song now controlled about half the territory of China proper, with the border between Song and Jin running about midway between the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers.
 1. Since at least the middle Tang, China's center of population had been shifting to the south.
 2. In the Southern Song period, about 60 percent of Chinese lived in Song territory.
 3. The geography of the south, which featured more hills and valleys than the broad North China Plain, gave rise to greater local diversity in language dialects and cultural practices.
 4. Local elites were stronger in the south and played greater roles in local society, with somewhat less of a focus on national, empire-wide affairs.
 - B. In conjunction with the growth of the examination culture and overall population growth, elite society evolved in several ways.
 1. Literati families came to intermarry in much more local contexts than had previously been the case.
 2. Local elites took on a number of quasi-governmental functions, such as infrastructure maintenance and public security.
 3. Local private academies became important in the educational sphere.

- II.** Development of the commercial economy was rapid and generated new tensions in Chinese society.
- A.** The more fragmented geography of the south encouraged local specialization in production, and this, in turn, fostered the growth of long-distance trade.
 - 1. In agriculture, some regions became the grain production centers, while others began to specialize in tea or in the supply of mulberry leaves for the silk industry.
 - 2. Textile production, especially silk and cotton, began to be concentrated in the Jiangnan region, near the mouth of the Yangzi.
 - 3. At the city of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province, great imperial kilns were built, and this became one of the first true industrial cities in the world.
 - 4. Tens of thousands of workers lived in Jingdezhen, where the ceramic factories ran around the clock and great warehouses served a network of distribution that covered the empire and extended overseas.
 - B.** Song imperial policy encouraged not only the growth of Jingdezhen but economic development in general.
 - 1. The state expanded coinage to increase the money supply and allowed Chinese coins to circulate across East Asia, becoming an international currency in Korea and Japan, as well.
 - 2. The Song also experimented with the use of paper money and began to develop other instruments of exchange, not unlike the early development of banking in Flanders and northern Italy around the same time.
- III.** A class of wealthy merchants grew in size, generating new social stresses.
- A.** In the traditional Confucian social ideology, merchants were the bottom rank of society.
 - 1. There was a four-rank hierarchy of social classes.
 - 2. The literati, the *shi*, were at the top, because they managed the affairs of society through good government.
 - 3. Peasant farmers came next, because they produced the food for everyone.
 - 4. Artisans were next, because they made useful goods.
 - 5. Merchants were at the bottom, because they did not produce anything themselves but merely made profits from the labors of others; in effect, they were social parasites.
 - B.** Now, however, merchants were numerous enough and wealthy enough to compete with the literati for prestige.

1. Merchant families built elaborate mansions, wore fine clothes, collected books and art, and donated money to public charities.
 2. Merchants and their sons and grandsons, however, remained barred from participation in the imperial examinations.
- C. In the West, this kind of tension gave rise to the growth of bourgeois society, but not in China.
1. Although there were tensions and, at times, antagonisms between literati and merchant interests, there was also convergence.
 2. Many literati families, especially in the wealthy Jiangnan region, became silent partners in commercial ventures, investing profits from their landholdings in pawnshops or textile production along with merchants.
 3. Merchant families remained excluded from the examination system, but they could purchase honorary titles from the government and, thus, shared in a system of public prestige with the literati.
 4. Merchant families also gained honors through patronage for religious or cultural activities in local communities.
 5. The growth of the commercial economy and the social evolution it engendered were disrupted by the Mongol conquest.
 6. Before we take up that story, however, we need to consider the full development of *Daoxue* Neo-Confucianism in the work of Zhu Xi, which we will examine in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Shiba Yoshinobu, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*.

Supplemental Reading:

Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276*.

Questions to Consider:

1. The Southern Song was geographically the smallest of the major Chinese dynasties, yet its influence through international trade was quite extensive. How might the economic changes taking place in the 12th and 13th centuries have affected the self-image of educated Chinese?
2. A corollary of the economic expansion of the Southern Song was greater ease of travel for more Chinese, which is reflected in the growth of travel writing. How might this be related to the changes in painting discussed in Lecture Sixteen?

Lecture Nineteen

Zhu Xi and Neo-Confucianism

Scope: In this lecture, we will return to the developments taking place in thought and deal with one of the greatest figures in Chinese intellectual history, Zhu Xi (1130–1200). In the 12th century, Zhu Xi brought together many elements from the debates of the 11th century and forged what is sometimes called the *Neo-Confucian synthesis*. Basically, this was a shift in the way moral values were conceived. Rather than being based on the accumulated historical experience of human society, Zhu Xi's view of moral values was based in a cosmic order. He emphasized the concepts of *li* ("pattern" or "principle") and *dao* ("the Way"), or the proper order of things. His teaching is known in Chinese as *Daoxue*, the "Learning of the Way." *Daoxue*, especially in the form of Zhu Xi's commentaries on the Confucian classical texts, became the only officially accepted interpretation of the ideas and concepts at the heart of the examination system.

Outline

- I. Zhu Xi was arguably the most significant intellectual figure in China since Han Yu.
 - A. In some ways analogous to the role of Thomas Aquinas in Western intellectual history, Zhu Xi was both an innovator and an advocate of a return to antiquity.
 1. Zhu Xi felt that much of the interpretive commentarial tradition that had grown up in Confucianism had obscured the original teachings.
 2. His main argument was that one should seek to understand the inherent patterns in nature and derive an understanding of the principles of morality from them.
 3. He argued that this was, in fact, what the sages of antiquity had done and that the gentleman should seek to emulate their models, rather than simply read texts.
 4. Nonetheless, he advocated a clear program of Confucian study and produced critical commentaries of his own on the classical texts.
 - B. Zhu Xi's ideas emphasized the need for self-cultivation by the gentleman.
 1. It was the duty of the gentleman to learn from antiquity and to observe the world around him.
 2. Zhu Xi used the phrase *gewu*, which means the "investigation of things," to describe this process.

3. By developing his own sense of knowledge and morality, the gentleman prepared himself to serve in government or to lead in private life.
- II. Among the texts he emphasized, one called *The Great Learning* was perhaps most important.
- A. *The Great Learning (Daxue)* was an ancient text, originally part of a larger book on ritual.
 1. Zhu Xi selected this passage, and another known as the *Doctrine of the Mean*, from the *Liji*, or *Record of Rites*.
 2. He made these two texts freestanding works in their own right.
 3. Along with the *Analects* of Confucius and the book of Mencius, they became known as the Four Books and were the central texts of Confucian learning from then on.
 - B. *The Great Learning* describes the connections between public life and individual moral cultivation.
 1. It begins with the efforts of the ancients to seek a well-ordered world.
 2. It moves from the realm of the state, to the family, to the individual, and to the internal consciousness of the individual.
 3. The key to everything is *gewu*, the “investigation of things,” which can yield a perception and understanding of *li*, the patterns and principles of the universe.
 4. Once these are grasped, an individual can rectify his own thought and behavior, can bring order to his family, can govern his own state, and in the end, the whole world will come to be properly ordered.
- III. The concepts of *li* and *qi* are central to Zhu Xi’s thought.
- A. *Li* is a natural pattern or principle.
 - B. *Qi* is the substance that gives physical existence to the patterns of *li*.
 1. *Li* and *qi* are, in essence, inseparable.
 2. *Qi* can be “muddy” or “clear.”
 3. The clearer it is, the more fully the *li*, the natural pattern, is made manifest and the more it is in harmony with the Way.
- IV. Zhu Xi’s teachings, known as *Daoxue*, are often called Neo-Confucianism.
- A. In accord with Chinese culture, Zhu Xi presented himself as one who returned to the wisdom of antiquity.
 1. He based his ideas on the authority of classical texts.
 2. He argued that he wanted to revive the Way of the Sages, not create something new.

B. Yet his ideas were, in many ways, innovative.

1. His metaphysical interpretation of the source of moral values was a sharp break with the established Confucian discourse.
2. His willingness to edit and revise the inherited classical canon was radical.
3. His emphasis on moral self-cultivation put a new emphasis on the role of the individual and has been seen, in some ways, in harmony with the developing commercial economy of the Song.
4. As with economic development, however, the course of intellectual change was severely disrupted by the trauma and drama of the Mongol conquests, the story of which we will take up in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Donald J. Munro, *Images of Human Nature*.

Supplemental Reading:

Daniel K. Gardner, *Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Zhu Xi's synthesis of Neo-Confucianism took place in a context of economic, political, and social instability and flux. Why might his metaphysical interpretation of Confucianism have found a particularly receptive audience in such a context?
2. What does Zhu Xi's reconfiguration of the classical canon suggest about his view of writing, in contrast, perhaps, to that of Han Yu?

Lecture Twenty

The Rise of the Mongols

Scope: While China under the Song was prospering economically and undergoing a great age of art and philosophy, a nomadic people in the grasslands beyond the Great Wall began to build a new steppe empire and would soon launch the greatest age of conquest yet seen by mankind. The leader of this process was a man named Temujin, who would come to be known as Chinggis Khan, more commonly rendered as Genghis Khan. This lecture recounts the story of Temujin's rise to power over the Mongols and their dramatic conquest of much of Eurasia in the 13th century. The empire Temujin built by the time of his death in 1227 extended from north China to Persia. His sons would extend it even further, from Korea to the Ukraine and from Syria to Vietnam.

Outline

- I. Temujin forged the scattered tribes of the Mongols into a major power at the end of the 12th century.
 - A. Temujin was the son of a minor chieftain.
 1. His father was murdered when Temujin was still a young man.
 2. The Mongol tribes at that time were scattered and disorganized, without a strong leader.
 3. Temujin and his family had to hide out in a remote part of the grasslands.
 4. He conceived the ambition not only to avenge his father but to unite the tribes into a great fighting force.
 - B. In the 1180s and 1190s, Temujin built up his power base.
 1. At the age of 16, he returned from his family's exile and claimed a bride who had been promised him when he was a little boy.
 2. He used family connections and his own courage and charisma to build an initial set of alliances with tribal leaders.
 3. In 1190, he was made *khan*, or "chief," of one of the tribal groups.
 4. Several other young men, most notably one named Jamukha, were also rising in prominence at this time.
 5. By around 1200, Temujin began to aim to unite all the tribes, but this caused fear and anxiety among some elders.
 6. In 1204, he was deserted by many of his allies, and his hopes seemed to be crushed.
 - C. Temujin seized supreme power in 1206.

1. He inflicted a stunning defeat on his enemies, attacking them while they were drunk in celebration of the supposed collapse of his power.
 2. He called a great assembly of the tribes, a *quriltai*, in 1206, at which he was elected Chinggis Khan, the ruler of all Mongols.
- II.** Once he achieved unity for the Mongols, he led them into a new age of conquest and expansion.
- A.** Power and prestige among the Mongols was based on an economy of animal husbandry, supplemented by the spoils of raiding.
 1. A leader had to share out the loot from his military raids with his followers.
 2. Once the Mongols were unified under a single leader, they needed a new source of booty and turned to their non-Mongol neighbors.
 - B.** The Mongols began to attack neighboring states and the rich trade routes of Central Asia.
 1. The Xi Xia empire, which lay south of Mongolia and west of the Jin state in northern China, was their first target.
 2. The Mongols also launched attacks against the city-states along the Silk Road, such as Hami, Kashgar, and Samarkand.
 - C.** The Mongols developed their own special military style.
 1. They relied on fear and intimidation for much of their effectiveness.
 2. They were great horsemen and could cover great distances with unbelievable speed; thus, they often took their intended victims completely by surprise.
 3. When they besieged a city, they issued a basic ultimatum: Surrender and live or resist and die.
 4. They incorporated the defeated armies of their enemies into their own forces, treating them well and, in the process, greatly expanding their military capability.
- III.** In 1227, Temujin died and was succeeded by his son Ögedei, but later, the empire was divided among his grandsons.
- A.** Temujin had led his forces on the conquest of much of northern China, Central Asia, and into Persia.
 1. On his death, the Mongol armies returned to their homeland to elect a new leader.
 2. In 1229, they chose Ögedei, who ruled until 1241.
 3. The Mongols renewed their campaigns of conquests, extending them into Russia and Eastern Europe, further into the Middle East, and over greater stretches of north China and Korea.

4. After Ögedei's death, the Mongols could not settle on a new leader, and rival groups fought among themselves.
 5. Eventually, the empire was divided among four of Temujin's grandsons.
- B.** Each of Temujin's grandsons took control of a separate khanate.
1. Batu Khan took over Russia and the Ukraine, giving rise to the Cossacks.
 2. Hulegu controlled Persia, and his descendants, known as the Ilkhan, would later conquer much of India, where they became known as the Mughals.
 3. The line of Chagadai ruled over Central Asia, where the greatest of the later Mongols, Tamerlane, would arise in the 15th century.
 4. Finally, Khubilai Khan became ruler over the Mongol conquests in East Asia and would complete the conquest of Song China in 1279.
- C.** The Mongol Age of Conquest was unprecedented and gave rise to some unusual events.
1. Travelers could go from the eastern Mediterranean all the way to the Pacific in relative safety, under Mongol rule.
 2. When the Mongols invading Persia and the Middle East encountered the Crusades, there was a brief hope among the Europeans for an alliance.
 3. This was based on the myth of Prester John, who was believed to be a Christian ruler of a great empire in Central Asia.
 4. There were, in fact, followers of a form of Christianity known as Nestorianism among the ranks of the Mongols.
 5. We will turn to the story of Mongol rule in China in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

J. J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests*.

Supplemental Reading:

Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. The Mongols were often ruthless in their treatment of conquered cities and countries. Why would people have continued to resist them?
2. The power of the Mongol armies came to seem almost unstoppable, yet when the reigning khan died, all warfare ceased as the commanding generals had to return to Mongolia for the great assembly to choose the new leader(s). What does this suggest about the nature of the Mongol polity?

Lecture Twenty-One

The Yuan Dynasty

Scope: Khubilai, a grandson of Chinggis, became Great Khan in 1260 and completed the conquest of China in 1279. He ruled as emperor of the Yuan, or “Eternal,” dynasty until his death in 1296. This lecture covers the establishment of the Yuan state and the nature of Mongol rule in China, the situation of the Chinese literati elite under Mongol domination, and the changes in China’s economy and culture brought about by the Mongol conquest. The visit of Marco Polo to China during Khubilai’s reign provides some special insights into this dramatic era.

Outline

- I. Khubilai Khan came to power in 1260 when the vast territories conquered by the Mongols up to then were divided among the grandsons of Chinggis.
 - A. Khubilai’s khanate included the old homeland of the Mongols.
 1. The former Jin domain in northern China had been subdued in 1234.
 2. Mongol forces had also established control over Korea.
 - B. The Mongols debated how to incorporate China into their empire.
 1. Before Khubilai’s reign, some Mongols had advocated killing off the 60 million Chinese in north China to convert their farms into pasture for Mongol ponies.
 2. The former Jin official Yelu Quzai managed to convince them that taxing the peasants as a sustainable source of income was preferable.
- II. Khubilai completed the conquest of China and made himself emperor of the Yuan dynasty.
 - A. A series of military campaigns through the 1260s and 1270s led to the final fall of Hangzhou and the end of the Song in 1279.
 1. The Mongols had to adapt their usual methods of warfare to deal with the densely populated and geographically challenging situation in southern China.
 2. They moved troops from Persia to help with urban warfare.
 3. They learned to fight on the rivers and lakes of the south, developing a navy for the first time.
 - B. To demonstrate his victory over the Song, Khubilai proclaimed himself emperor and adopted the dynastic name of Yuan, meaning “Eternal” or “Everlasting.”
 1. This was part of an overall pattern of adapting to local political traditions across the territories conquered by the Mongols.

2. Khubilai set up his capital at the site of modern Beijing and called it Dadu, meaning “Great Capital.”
3. Not all the Mongol leadership supported these actions, and some refused to settle in China, returning to their old nomadic lifestyle in the Mongolian grasslands.

III. The Yuan dynasty developed a unique system of rule in China.

- A. The Mongols did not trust the Chinese literati elite.
 1. They resented the surprising toughness of the Chinese resistance.
 2. They also were unable to read and understand classical Chinese and, thus, felt uneasy about their ability to know what the literati were up to.
- B. The Mongols employed people from outside China in the imperial administration.
 1. These people were called the *semu ren*, which means “people with colored eyes,” because many of them came from Persia or Russia and had blue eyes.
 2. The *semu ren* were put into place in provincial and local government offices, where they had authority over the literati officials.
 3. Nonetheless, the challenges of administering so vast and populous an empire meant that the Mongols had to rely on the literati to a significant extent.
- C. As time went by, the literati both resisted and overcame Mongol discrimination.
 1. Literati gentlemen withdrew from public life in large numbers, devoting themselves to cultural pursuits.
 2. New styles of literati painting and new schools of calligraphy developed during this time as gentlemen sought to demonstrate their sophistication in contrast to the “barbarian” conquerors.
 3. Popular theater developed during this time, as well, with plays often written by literati using subtle historical and literary allusions to encode anti-Mongol messages.

IV. The Venetian Marco Polo visited China during Khubilai’s reign, and his stories of the fabulous East have provided a window on this place and time.

- A. Marco Polo traveled to China from Venice in 1272.
 1. He journeyed with his father and uncle, who had both been to China earlier.
 2. This was a great age for travel and trade overland across the Eurasian landmass, because the Mongols controlled the roads from the eastern Mediterranean all the way to the Pacific.
 3. Not only the Polo family, but other traders and representatives of the church, went to China in these years.
- B. Marco Polo stayed in China for nearly 20 years.

1. He became, in effect, one of the *semu ren* and was employed by Khubilai both in local government and as a diplomatic envoy.
 2. He served as governor of the former Song capital at Hangzhou.
 3. He escorted Mongol princesses sent as brides to India.
- C. After his return to Europe, Polo's stories of China were widely read but often treated as fantasy.
1. His descriptions of the wealth and power of China were seen as unbelievable. His book came to be known as "The Millions," in reference to the "millions of lies" he was alleged to have told.
 2. Nonetheless, Polo's book inspired great interest in the Far East.
 3. Columbus owned a heavily annotated copy of Polo's book, which contributed to his desire to find a trade route to China.
- V. The Mongols ruled China for less than a century after the fall of the Song.
- A. After Khubilai died in 1296, there was a succession of weak and incompetent emperors.
1. Power at the court fell increasingly into the hands of Chinese advisors (members of the literati).
 2. Across the empire, the literati returned to their dominant role in public life.
 3. This was most clearly shown in 1313, when the imperial examination system, which had been abolished by the Mongols, was reinstated.
- B. In the middle of the 14th century, a series of disasters struck the empire.
1. The Mongol state was not prepared to cope with powerful challenges.
 2. As we shall see in the next lecture, a combination of natural and human factors led to the collapse of the Mongols and the rise of a new dynasty.

Essential Reading:

Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*.

Supplemental Reading:

Elizabeth Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Even though the Mongols mistrusted the Chinese literati and had an alternative pool of administrative talent in the *semu ren*, in the end, the literati managed to regain their dominant position in the imperial bureaucracy. Why should this have been the case?
2. It often appears that non-Chinese peoples who conquer China are "assimilated" or, in some way, won over to Chinese civilization. If the

Mongols had wanted to avoid this, how could they have protected their identity?

C. After his return to Europe, Polo's stories of China were widely read but often treated as legends.

1. His descriptions of the wealth and power of China in the 13th century, in association with Marco Polo's travels to be known as "The Silk Road", in association with the Silk Road, were widely read in Europe.

2. Columbus owned a heavily annotated copy of Polo's book, which inspired his interest in the East.

V. The Mongols ruled China for less than a century after the fall of the Song.

A. After Kublai Khan died in 1294, there was a succession of weak and ineffectual emperors.

1. Power in the court fell increasingly into the hands of a Chinese eunuch (member of the harem).

2. Across the empire, the land remained in the hands of the nobles.

3. The population of the empire declined.

4. The examination system, which had been established by the Mongols to recruit the civil service, was abandoned.

C. A. In the middle of the 14th century, a series of disasters struck the empire.

B. The Mongol state was not prepared to cope with the growing number of rebellions.

1. As we shall see in the next lecture, a combination of natural and human factors led to the collapse of the Mongols and the rise of a new dynasty.

2. Their sophistication in contrast to the "barbarians".

3. For order to be restored, as well as unity, the Mongols had to be replaced by a more sophisticated and unified government.

4. The Venetian explorer Marco Polo, who had been in China for 17 years, was the first European to describe the Mongol Empire.

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12. The Venetian explorer Marco Polo, who had been in China for 17 years, was the first European to describe the Mongol Empire.

Lecture Twenty-Two

The Rise of the Ming

Scope: By the middle of the 14th century, Mongol power had waned. Without the continued stimulus of conquest, the Mongols lost much of the special role they had played in Asian history. Chinese bureaucratic elites returned to dominance in government and weakened the state through their internal conflicts over power. In the 1340s, the great plague, which caused the Black Death in Europe, also devastated central China. The failures of the Mongol dynasty or the Chinese landed elite to effectively respond to this disaster led to the outbreak of peasant rebellions and the fall of the Yuan. Zhu Yuanzhang rose to power as the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty but nearly wrecked his creation through his paranoid mistrust of the literati official whom he needed to administer his empire. Only in the reign of the third Ming emperor, Zhu Di, did the dynasty become truly stable.

Outline

- I. The Yuan dynasty began to collapse in the middle decades of the 14th century.
 - A. The imperial government was paralyzed by internal conflicts.
 1. Mongol nobles at court competed for influence over the emperor.
 2. Chinese literati officials formed rival factions and fought for patronage and prestige.
 - B. A series of disasters caused great suffering among the people.
 1. In the 1340s, a great plague swept through the Yangzi River valley in central China.
 2. This was likely the same wave of infection that appeared in Europe around 1346 and became known there as the Black Death.
 3. In parts of central China, as much as 50 percent of the population died.
 4. This high mortality led to further problems, as failure to maintain the dykes along the river resulted in massive flooding and further disease and devastation.
 - C. Neither the imperial government nor the local literati elites responded effectively to these crises.
 1. The government had no strong leadership to guide action.
 2. Local elites were afraid of disease and hoarded their own grain supplies rather than providing relief.
- II. Large-scale popular rebellions began to break out in the 1350s.
 - A. The center of this activity was the middle and lower Yangzi valley.

1. Local strongmen, often leaders of mystical peasant movements, rose up in several areas along the river.
 2. The Yuan government effectively disappeared, and these rebel groups began to fight among themselves.
- B.** One leader who became prominent was Zhu Yuanzhang.
1. Zhu Yuanzhang was an orphan whose parents had died in the plagues.
 2. He had lived as an itinerant monk, learning about mystical Buddhism and popular religion.
 3. He joined one of the main peasant movements, the Red Turbans.
 4. His military skills and intelligence helped him rise to a position as one of the leadership.
 5. In the early 1360s, he took over as the main leader and changed the goal of the movement to the founding of a new dynasty.
 6. In 1368, he proclaimed the Ming (“Bright”) dynasty and launched a military campaign to drive the Mongols out of China.
- III.** The Ming dynasty came to power as the Mongols withdrew to the grasslands.
- A.** Zhu Yuanzhang captured Dadu without a fight.
1. Mongol forces abandoned the city and crossed the mountains north of Beijing to return to their ancestral home in the grasslands.
 2. Zhu Yuanzhang decided to make his capital at Nanjing, on the Yangzi River, but placed one of his sons, Zhu Di, in command of the former Mongol capital as a defense against their return.
- B.** Zhu Yuanzhang set up a traditional Chinese bureaucratic government.
1. He relied on the literati as his administrative elite.
 2. But his relationship with the literati was strained by his resentment over the selfishness of elite families during the crises of the 1340s–1350s.
 3. As a poorly educated man from a peasant background, he also feared the subtleties and sophistications of literati language and culture.
 4. He established an examination system but suspended it after the first round of exams in 1370.
- C.** Zhu Yuanzhang soon began to manifest a paranoid attitude in his relations with his ministers.
1. He restored the examinations in 1380 but always mistrusted the literary gentlemen.
 2. In 1380, he came to believe that his chief minister was plotting against him and had the minister executed, along with several thousand of his associates and family members.
 3. Zhu Yuanzhang also abolished the office of chief minister and took that role into his own hands.

4. For the rest of his reign, until 1398, he carried out massive purges from time to time and became increasingly obsessed with perceived threats to his power.
- IV. After Zhu Yuanzhang's death, the Ming made a difficult transition to stability.
- A. Zhu Yuanzhang was succeeded by his grandson Zhu Yunwen, known as the Jianwen emperor.
 1. Zhu Yunwen had a much more trusting relationship with the literati.
 2. He reoriented Ming government to a more Confucian model.
 - B. Zhu Di, the prince of Yan, resented being passed over for the succession.
 1. Zhu Di felt that Zhu Yunwen was abandoning the policies of Zhu Yuanzhang.
 2. He decided to seek the throne for himself.
 3. Between 1400 and 1402, there was a series of political maneuvers which increased Zhu Di's power.
 4. In 1402, Zhu Di led his army south and captured Nanjing.
 - C. Zhu Di took the throne and proclaimed himself the Yongle emperor.
 1. He executed leading Confucian officials who refused to recognize his usurpation.
 2. But he continued many of the pro-Confucian policies of his nephew.
 3. He especially increased the power of the Grand Secretariat, which became the most important body in the imperial government.
 4. He moved the capital north to Beijing, which he built up into the great imperial city it remains today.
 - D. Zhu Di launched a great, but short-lived, age of maritime exploration.
 1. Under the leadership of the eunuch admiral Zheng He, huge Chinese fleets made seven voyages of trade and exploration.
 2. They sailed through Southeast Asia, across the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and down the east coast of Africa at least as far as Mozambique.
 3. These voyages were discontinued a few years after Zhu Di's death in 1424, and the Ming dynasty entered a long middle period of stability and growth, which we will explore in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Edward L. Dreyer, *Early Ming China*.

Supplemental Reading:

Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Zhu Yuanzhang's mistrust of the literati drove him to terrorize and abuse his highest officials. Yet by the end of the reign of the third Ming emperor, the literati had once again assumed effective control of the state. How could any emperor preserve his royal prerogatives in the face of bureaucratic government?
2. If China's fleets of exploration between 1405 and 1435 had gone around the Cape of Good Hope into the Atlantic and, perhaps, continued up the African coast to Europe, how might world history have been different over the last 500 years?

Lecture Twenty-Three

The Ming Golden Age

Scope: The 15th and 16th centuries became a new age of economic growth, far surpassing that of the Song. Art and literature flourished, in part driven by the consumer power of a revived merchant class. Printing expanded and fueled a growth in literacy, which in turn, reinforced the demand for more and cheaper books. This dynamic economy created tensions in society, as commercial wealth gave greater power to non-literati elites, who increasingly challenged their systematic exclusion from participation in government. Merchants were legally barred from taking the Confucian examinations, but that restriction, which had extended to three generations, was reduced to one in the Ming. The great voyages of exploration at the beginning of the 15th century, however, did not lead to a redefinition of China's role in the larger world. After the 1430s, China returned to its traditional security concerns in Inner Asia and left the maritime world to private traders.

Outline

- I. The Ming imperial order stabilized in the middle decades of the 15th century.
 - A. After the reign of Zhu Di, there were several weak or juvenile emperors who allowed the power of the literati to reemerge.
 1. Zhu Gaozhi reigned for less than a year in 1425.
 2. Zhu Zhanji held the throne from 1426–1435 but was not a dynamic ruler.
 3. Zhu Qizhen was only eight years old when he came to the throne in 1435.
 - B. The Grand Secretariat became the central office of the imperial government.
 1. Three men, all with the surname Yang, served as grand secretaries during this time.
 2. Yang Shiqi was a leading literary figure, as well.
 3. Yang Rong and Yang Pu had become grand secretaries under Zhu Di and continued to guide government policies after his death.
 - C. Eunuchs also began to gain power in the Inner Palace.
 1. Eunuchs had been politically powerful in the Han and Tang periods.
 2. Zhu Yuanzhang had legally excluded them from meddling in government, but Zhu Di had begun to employ them as spies and secret agents.

3. In the 1420s, a school was set up to teach eunuchs to read and to train them in handling imperial documents.
- D.** The mature Ming state saw a balance of power between civil officials and eunuchs.
1. Although the Confucian literati despised eunuchs, they also needed their cooperation in dealing with the emperor, who was often strongly influenced by his Inner Palace eunuch advisors.
 2. Eunuchs, in turn, sought to legitimize themselves outside the palace by patronizing Buddhist monasteries or supporting charitable works.
- II.** While the government settled into a long era of relatively smooth operations, society underwent rapid growth.
- A.** The Ming government set up an efficient system of postal communications using a network of roadways and way stations that fostered trade and promoted market integration.
1. The postal system spanned the entire empire.
 2. Horses were maintained at each station, and lodgings were provided for couriers.
 3. Other travelers, especially merchants, began to use these routes, because the Ming military protected them.
 4. Private businesses, including hostels and stables, grew up alongside the government post stations.
 5. Merchants were also allowed to ship goods on government barges on the Grand Canal if there was room.
- B.** The process of regional economic specialization that had begun in the Song resumed with even greater strength.
1. Improvements in technology fed growth in the textile industry in Jiangnan.
 2. Better overland and riverine trade networks encouraged tea production in Zhejiang and Hunan.
 3. The kilns in Jingdezhen returned to their large-scale operations.
 4. Further developments in financial markets, especially the rise of banking houses in Shanxi, also helped promote economic development.
- C.** International trade was a complex but important field of growth.
1. The Ming government remained officially aloof from maritime trade and often sought to suppress it.
 2. Coastal trade sometimes took the form of pirate raids, causing serious security concerns.
 3. Eventually, a “tally” trade with Japan developed, using matching markers to legitimate the roles of trading partners.
 4. The trade with Japan was especially important as a source of silver, which helped increase the monetization of the Chinese economy.

5. In the later 16th century, silver from the new Spanish mines in Latin America began to flow into China via the Manila trade, further accelerating commercialization and monetization.

D. Economic growth was matched by population expansion.

1. In 1380, the Ming population was about 155 million.
2. By 1500, it had grown to around 230 million.
3. At the end of the Ming dynasty in the middle 17th century, it would rise to nearly 270 million.
4. Despite this large increase in population, economic growth was sufficient to produce rising standards of living for the vast majority of the Chinese.

III. The Ming did face some serious challenges.

A. The Mongols threatened the northern frontier from time to time.

1. In 1449, Mongol raids provoked a Ming military campaign that ended in disaster, with the emperor being captured and held for ransom.
2. A century later, in 1550, Mongol forces raided within sight of the walls of Beijing, and the question of border security became a major political issue in the 1550s.

B. So-called Japanese pirates raided the Jiangnan coastal region.

1. Government attempts to restrict coastal trade drove merchants into outlaw activities.
2. After suppressing the raids militarily, the Ming relaxed their policies and allowed some trade to proceed.
3. Actual maritime trade was always much greater than that officially acknowledged or tolerated by the government.

C. By the late 16th century, new problems began to emerge.

1. Some were the result of the very success of the dynasty and the rapid growth of the economy.
2. Others resulted from social and political stresses and related cultural and intellectual developments.
3. Still others were the result of changes taking place outside China.
4. We will turn to the late Ming in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure*.

Supplemental Reading:

John Dardess, *A Ming Society*.

Kenneth J. Hammond, ed., *The Human Tradition in Premodern China*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did the Ming government continue to discriminate against merchants in barring their sons from taking the Confucian examinations?
2. The Ming state prohibited most trade with foreigners, yet China was one of the most important participants in the global economy of the 15th–17th centuries. Could or should the Ming state have played a more active role in promoting international trade?

Lecture Twenty-Four

Gridlock and Crisis

Scope: In the later years of the 16th century, China began to develop new problems, based in part on the very success of the Ming dynasty. Economic growth had led to social tensions and had helped set the stage for the emergence of new philosophical movements emphasizing individual moral responsibility. Wang Yangming and his followers spread a new interpretation of Confucianism that stressed each individual's "innate knowledge of the good." Meanwhile, China's role in the global economy led to the influx of massive amounts of silver from the New World, which further fueled commercial growth. Efforts to rationalize imperial fiscal administration led to tax reforms that favored the more developed parts of the empire but exacerbated problems in remote regions. Political conflicts also hamstrung the state's ability to deal with deepening problems. In the first decade of the 17th century, the Ming sank into a terminal decline.

Outline

- I. The reign of the Wanli emperor, Zhu Yijun (r. 1572–1620), was a time of deepening crisis for the Ming.
 - A. Zhu Yijun's reign began well, but problems began to emerge in the 1580s.
 1. The emperor's main advisor was the chief grand secretary Zhang Juzheng.
 2. Zhang sought to strengthen the power and efficiency of the monarchy.
 3. He pursued policies designed to reform the revenue system and restrain the excesses of local officials and private literati interests.
 4. He also sought to streamline the tax system in light of the growing commercialization of the economy, having taxes paid in cash rather than in grain or cloth.
 - B. There was resistance to some of Zhang's reforms, and others led to unanticipated consequences.
 1. Landowning families who were well connected to the ranks of officials sought to frustrate government efforts to reform the tax system.
 2. The "Single Whip" reforms, which converted tax payments to cash, benefited parts of the empire, such as Jiangnan or the southeast coast, that were highly commercialized and had a good deal of silver in circulation.

3. Other areas, such as the dry highlands of the northwest or the rugged hills of Guizhou and Guangxi, where the commercial economy was less developed, were hurt by the need to pay taxes in silver.
 4. Zhang Juzheng fell from power in the early 1580s, and the Wanli emperor increasingly came into conflict with leading Confucian officials.
- II.** New ideas about integrity and individualism contributed to a moralization of political life that led to a gridlock in government.
- A.** These ideas originated with the philosopher and official Wang Yangming in the early 16th century.
1. Wang, the last of the great Confucian thinkers in imperial history, emphasized the idea that all individuals, not only members of the literati elite, have an “innate knowledge of the Good.”
 2. Among his followers, some gave his ideas a radical interpretation, which called for individual moral responsibility and placed one’s personal conscience at the center of one’s moral universe.
 3. Popular movements involving merchants, artisans, and farmers grew up with these ideas as their ideology, sometimes defying official authority and establishing utopian communities.
- B.** In the ranks of the literati, Wang’s ideas led to a moralization of political discourse.
1. Toward the end of the 16th century, debates and controversies at court tended to be framed not as issues for compromise and pragmatism but as black-and-white moral issues.
 2. Officials at court criticized the emperor on moral grounds, especially over his desire to replace his empress with a new favorite consort and to name a new heir to the throne.
 3. Aspiring officials and examination candidates criticized the court officials as a power-hungry in-group.
 4. In the early 17th century, such groups as the Donglin (“Eastern Forest”) Academy came to act almost like political parties in pursuit of their moral programs, treating their political rivals as agents of evil rather than simply gentlemen with differing ideas. The basis for their criticism was that the emperor refused to cooperate with court officials, thus proving that they must be corrupt.
- C.** As economic and social crises deepened, the Ming government was unable to mount effective responses.
1. The economy continued to expand, and new inflows of silver from Latin America via Manila only accelerated the process.
 2. The gap between the developing coast and Yangzi valley with the poorer interior grew greater, and the burden of silver taxation

began to depress the livelihood of farmers in many parts of the empire.

3. Social stresses also grew as merchants competed for prestige with traditional literati elites in a growing culture of consumerism.
4. The political system was mired in moral rhetoric and factional conflict, and leaders paid little attention to the developing problems.
5. Meanwhile, beyond the Great Wall in the northeast, a new power was rising among the descendants of the Jurchen and their neighbors, which would become known as the Manchus and whose story we will explore in the next lecture.

Essential Reading:

Ray Huang, *1587: A Year of No Significance*.

Supplemental Reading:

Yang Ye, *Vignettes from the Late Ming*.

Questions to Consider:

1. The late Ming was a period of great social anxiety about status, about values, and about power. In some ways, it was also a period of great freedom and individualism. What might be the relationship between these phenomena?
2. The power of the landowning elite to thwart the reforms of Zhang Juzheng suggests a contradiction between the role of the literati as agents of the imperial state and as protectors of their own economic class interests. How could China have resolved this contradiction?

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