Chapter 11 Central and East Asia

600-1200
Tang Empire 618-755

- The Tang Empire was established in 618
- The Tang state:
  - Carried out a program of territorial expansion
  - Avoided over-centralization
  - Combined Turkic influence with Chinese Confucian traditions.
Buddhism and the Tang Empire

- The Tang emperors legitimized their control by using the Buddhist idea that kings are spiritual agents who bring their subjects into a Buddhist realm.
- Buddhist monasteries were important allies of the early Tang emperors; in return for their assistance, they received tax exemptions, land, and gifts.
Mahayana Buddhism

- Mahayana beliefs were flexible
- Mahayana beliefs encouraged the adaptation of local deities into a Mahayana pantheon
- Encouraged the translation of Buddhist texts into local languages.
• Buddhism spread through Central and East Asia
• This was the result of the trade routes that converged on the Tang capital, Chang’an
• These trade routes also brought other peoples and cultural influences to Chang’an, making it a cosmopolitan city
To Chang’an by Land and Sea

- Chang’an was the destination of ambassadors from other states sent to China under the *tributary system*.

- The city of Chang’an itself had over a million residents, most of them living outside the city walls.
- Foreigners in Chang’an lived in special compounds / urban residents in walled, gated residential quarters
- Roads and canals, including the Grand Canal, brought people and goods to the city
In the mid-eighth century, a Turkic group, the Uigurs, built an empire in Central Asia. The Uigurs were known as merchants and scribes, had strong ties to both Islam and China, and developed their own script. The Uigur Empire lasted for about fifty years.
Tibet

- Tibet was a large empire with access to Southeast Asia, China, South and Central Asia.

- Tibet was thus open to Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and even (via Iran) Greek culture.
The End of the Tang Empire, 879–907

- As its territory expanded the Tang Empire faced many internal rebellions
- This would help lead to the fall of the military governors that were trying to maintain peace.
- In 907 the Tang state would end and new smaller kingdoms would be established.
The Liao and Jin

- After the fall of the Tang a number of new states emerged in the former Tang territory:
  - Liao
  - Jin
  - Chinese Song
Liao

- The Liao lasted from 916-1121
- Had a strong military
- Forced the Song to give them annual payments of cash and silk in return for peace.
Song helped the Jurchens of northeast Asia to defeat the Liao

The Jurchens established their own Jin Empire, turned on the Song, and drove them out of north and central China in 1127

The Song continued to reign in south China as the Southern Song Empire (1127–1279).
In 1088 the engineer Su Song constructed a huge, chain-driven mechanical clock:
  - It told the time
  - The day of the month
  - Also indicated the movements of the moon and certain stars and planets
Song inventors also improved the previously invented compass, making it suitable for seafaring.

The Song also had a standing professionally trained, regularly paid military.

Iron and coal were important strategic resources for the Song military.
The Song produced large amounts of high-grade iron and steel for weapons, armor, and defensive works.

The Song also developed and used gunpowder weapons in their wars.
Economy and Society in Song China

- The *civil service examination system*, introduced in the Tang, reached its mature form in the Song.
- The examination broke the domination of the hereditary aristocracy by allowing men to be chosen for government service on the basis of merit.
However, men from poor families were unlikely to be able to devote the necessary time and resources to studying for the rigorous examinations.

With the invention of moveable type from Korea, the Song government was able to mass-produce authorized preparation texts for examination-takers.
During the Song period China’s population rose to 100 million.

Population growth and economic growth fed the rise of large, crowded, but very well-managed cities like Hangzhou.
Women’s Status during the Song

- Women’s status declined during the Song period
- Women were entirely subordinated to men and lost their rights to own and manage property; remarriage was forbidden
- Painfully bound feet became a mandatory status symbol for elite women \(\rightarrow\) foot-binding
Korea, Japan, Vietnam

- The Korean hereditary elite absorbed Confucianism and Buddhism from China and passed them along to Japan.
- The several small Korean kingdoms were united first by Silla in 668.
- Then by Koryo in the early 900s.
Japan

- Japan’s mountainous terrain was home to hundreds of small states that were unified – perhaps by horse-riding warriors from Korea – in the fourth or fifth century

- The unified state established its government at Yamato on Honshu Island.
In the mid-seventh century, the rulers of Japan implemented a series of political reforms to establish:
- centralized government
- legal code
- national histories

The native religion of Shinto survived alongside the imported Buddhist religion.
Vietnam

• Read about it!