CHINESE HISTORY –Post-classical Period (500 CE to 1500 CE)

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Overview

The collapse of the Han Dynasty in 220 CE ushered in a period of fragmentation and instability not seen in China for almost half a millennium. Some historians call this the period of the Six Dynasties. Others write about the "Three Kingdoms" period which succeeded the Han and lasted until 280 CE. Still others describe the 16 Kingdoms and the Southern and Northern Dynasties. Unfortunately, these designations do not adequately portray this period. One commonality found among all the rulers of this period was the desire to recreate the greatness and splendor of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). None succeeded. In spite of the fact there was no long-standing, unified government, Chinese society progressed. Technologically, there were advances in metallurgy, engineering, mathematics and agriculture. Literature flourished. Buddhism, which had existed in China before as a very small religion, began to flourish. It is perhaps most important to remember that there was a well-established culture in China, with generally agreed-upon social, religious and governmental traditions. Indeed, Chinese culture was quite old by this time. Even though governments and dynasties rose and fell in something close to a predictable cycle, the concept of "China" endured. The knowledge of how to govern a unified China remained. All that was needed to succeed was the right man (or group of men) meeting the right set of circumstances.

Events

The Sui Dynasty (589-618). The Wei River Valley in Shaanxi Province that had nourished the nascent Qin Dynasty in the 3rd century BCE gave birth to another short-lived but important dynasty in 6th century CE China: the Sui. The Sui, like the Qin, had as their capital the city of Chang'an (today known as Xi'an). It is not clear if the first Sui emperor was something closer to a warlord than to local aristocracy in the early years, but history records that he slowly overwhelmed his closest military rivals before proclaiming the establishment of the Sui Dynasty in 581 CE. Within a decade, all of China had fallen to his armies. The most famous Sui monarch, Emperor Yang (569-618), was not content to rule a unified China and invaded Manchuria, Korea, Vietnam and the northern frontier in an effort to recreate the boundaries of the Han Empire. The boldness and audacity of his military adventures had a cost, however. To pay for this, he imposed high taxes and demanded that society actively support him with large numbers of conscripts and the supplies to provision them. This did not endear him to the Chinese people. When his military adventures failed, his empire began to collapse and he was assassinated.

The Tang Dynasty (618-907). In the brief period of chaos that accompanied the collapse of the Sui, a general named Li Yuan (566-636) was able to subdue all of his adversaries. Li was an aristocrat and well versed in the ways of Chinese politics. He proclaimed the establishment of the Tang Dynasty in 618, which historians today remember as the greatest and most powerful of all the Chinese dynasties. Li took the name of Emperor Gaozu. Though of mixed heritage, he is remembered as a visionary leader who restored the old Confucian values to the court and to the entire country. As was the case with the first Han rulers in the 3rd century BCE and old Qin policies, the first Tang monarchs tweaked the pre-existing Sui system of government, relaxed the most onerous policies and oversaw the establishment of a second golden age.

Tang Foreign Policy. The Tang rulers were very aggressive in foreign policy. They succeeded in subduing Korea (through agreement rather than conquest), pushed into Vietnam and made areas protectorates as far west as Turkmenistan. This period in Chinese history is known for the Silk Road, a passage which linked East Asia economically with Persia, the Middle East and even Europe. Tang China had become larger and greater than even the Han Dynasty.

The Empress Wu. In the realm of politics, the Tang period is remembered by the ascension to the throne of the first and only empress—the Empress Wu (624-705). Empress Wu was initially the concubine of the Emperor Taizong (599-649), and then second wife of his son, the Emperor Gaozong (628-683). Gaozong, who is remembered for not being all that interested in the day-to-day administration of the realm when healthy, became ill in 665 and turned over much of the hard work to his second wife. Over the remaining years of his life, she governed in his name and consolidated power in her hands. Upon Gaozong's death, she usurped the throne and ruled in her own name until her death in 705. It is difficult to know how successful she was as an empress because the

Confucian elites vilified her to such an extent after her death that it is nearly impossible to separate out truth from fiction in one of the most vicious, far-reaching and thorough smear campaigns ever perpetrated in the history of China. Among their many complaints was her lack of filial piety because she usurped the throne. This was in strict contravention of Confucian teachings and was, apparently, unforgivable. On the other hand, many, many men have usurped the throne and have not been denigrated in the same way. The visceral hatred of the Empress Wu by the Confucian elites is matched only by the vilification of the Empress Dowager Ci'xi in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Song Dynasty (960-1279). Like the Han before them, the Tang Dynasty slowly collapsed over a period of a century or so. There were a series of internal revolts, such as the An Lushan rebellion (755-763), and external threats posed by barbarians on the periphery. This, combined with a series of ineffectual rulers and a steadily diminishing treasury, brought the Tang Dynasty to a close in 907. Unlike the period after the collapse of the Han, China did not experience hundreds of years of political chaos and fragmentation. Within 50 years, the Song Dynasty was established. The Song Dynasty was ruled by ethnic Han Chinese and was a large, wealthy and culturally vibrant kingdom. But the extent of territory they controlled was smaller than what their predecessor had ruled. This was complicated by the serious problems they had with border conflicts. Indeed, the northern and western frontiers were lost for hundreds of years. Some parts have still never returned to Chinese control. Perhaps most ominously, the Song began to face the threat posed by early Manchu and Mongol tribes. By 1127, the northern areas of the Song kingdom, from Beijing south to the Yangzi River, were lost to the Jin (the Manchu).

The Mongols. Neither the Jin nor the Turkish-speaking tribes of the west had any idea of the horror of what was about to be visited first upon them, then the Chinese, and finally, most of the rest of the world. The Mongols under Genghis Khan (1162-1227) seemed to come out of nowhere. They were a well-known, but minor threat to the Chinese and had most recently been a tributary group to the Manchu (Jin) in the 12th century. Soon thereafter, Genghis Khan arose to unify the unruly, war-like Mongols. First the Jin in Manchuria and northern China were decimated by the mounted, light cavalry of the Mongol hoards, then several of the Turkish-speaking tribes in western China and Kazakhstan fell. The Mongols took few prisoners and often engaged in the wanton slaughter of soldier, civilian and aristocrat alike—and they sometimes didn't distinguish between Chinese and other ethnicities when on campaign. In several areas, they "killed the land"—which is a nice way of saying they cleansed it of all human inhabitants. This was, of course, not possible in China proper, where the population numbered more than a hundred million. Nonetheless, the Southern Song Dynasty finally succumbed as well in 1279, at which point the population had dropped to approximately 77 million. Meanwhile, the Mongols under the grandson of Genghis Khan, Kublai (1215-1294), proclaimed the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) which was a vast and powerful empire. Kublai's cousins and uncles controlled the conquered areas as far west as Eastern Europe and as far south as Syria—and everything in between. Kublai himself laid claim to China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, the Siberian Far East and what is today the Russian steppe north and west of Mongolia. This was the largest land empire ever in the history of the world under the control of one man until the 18th century Russian Tsars began to lay claim to the same territory.

The Early Ming Dynasty. The Chinese expelled the Mongols in 1368, though Kublai's successors continued to rule in Mongolia for some time. In the decade or so of fighting beginning in the 1350s, another commoner, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398), arose to establish the final dynasty led by the Han Chinese—the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The Ming, as might be expected, are remembered for being inward looking. They cast a wary eye at the barbarians north of the border and built a series of interlocking fortifications that today are known as the Great Wall. Earlier Chinese monarchs had often built walls and fortifications to keep out the barbarians in the north—even the First Emperor Qin in the 3rd century BCE—but none were as vast and imposing as the Ming edifices. Given the most recent experiences, the founding Ming Emperor considered the northern barbarians to be an existential threat.

Government

Structure. All emperors in China, from the Qin in the 3rd century BCE down through the end of the Qing in 1911, were considered absolute monarchs. In theory, they ruled by decree, controlled all land and exercised the power of life and death over all in their realm. As subjects, any rights enjoyed by the Chinese were given by the monarch and could be withdrawn by the monarch. In practice, all Chinese emperors relied on aristocrats, who were often treated differently than commoners, and other government officials to help them rule. The monarchs of the post-classical age used many of the same elements of administration that the Han had used in antiquity, but modified them as

necessary. There was a highly organized, hierarchical structure for government and for society. There was a clear division between aristocrats, commoner, peasant and artisan. The empire was divided into administrative units. Each large unit was, in theory, administered by a governor who was usually named by the emperor himself and accountable personally to the emperor. The military was under the direct control of the emperor and was occasionally even commanded on the battlefield by the emperor, although aristocrats raised, maintained and led most campaigns after each dynasty was well established. The office of the inspector (also known as censor) also remained in place to provide reliable reports (sometimes known as memorials) to the emperor.

Vast Population. The plight of the peasants remained much the same. In some dynasties, they were tied to the land using one form or coercion or another. In the Sui (589-618) and Tang (618-907) periods, significant numbers of the peasant population enjoyed something close to "free-holder" status. This was particularly the case if they served in the military. And there were enormous numbers of peasants in Tang China, approximately 80 million. Interestingly, the population under the control of the Tang Emperor represented roughly one-quarter of the world's population, which was double the population of the contemporaneous Umayyad Caliphate and more than quadruple the number of the Carolingian Empire. I might add that troops from the Abbasid Caliphate later encountered Tang troops near Samarkand in Uzbekistan, so these civilizations knew each other quite well. The difficulties inherit in governing this vast and populous empire in a pre-modern age are easy to understand. In order to govern well, the Tang court created the world's first large-scale civil service examination.

The Civil Service Examination. Because of the size of the empire, it was impossible for the imperial household to maintain familial and/or close political ties with the number of high-level and mid-level administrators and aristocrats necessary to govern the empire. To meet this challenge, the Chinese created a meritocracy, which was based largely on one's ability to score well on a test over the Confucian classics. One had to be educated, literate and capable to do well, but in theory, anyone could take the test. Since governmental officials were needed at every level, tests were administered at various levels. All test-takers had to take the test on the local level. Those who scored the highest were allowed to proceed to the regional level. Those who passed at the local level but did not pass at the regional level became local bureaucrats. Those that passed at the regional level but did not score high enough to pass at the national level became government officials on the regional level. And so it went until the top scorers took a test administered, in theory, by the imperial household. In most test cycles, there was one top scorer who would move into a position to later become a governor, chancellor or other top advisor to the emperor. In due course, these Confucian elites became known as Mandarins or degree holders. The testing process was widely followed by the aspirational classes in China. Since most government positions could not be handed down to one's son, each person earned their own position. Those who passed at the highest level achieved national renown and were celebrated in their hometowns as heroes of the realm. In this way, the government at all levels was staffed by competent, moral men who understood and valued the Confucian system. Of course, there was graft and corruption which had to be rooted out every few decades. As impressive as this achievement was, it is perhaps more important to note that this system lasted, with a few interruptions, in one form or another from the Tang period to the 20th century—more than 1000 years.

Culture

The Silk Road. The culture of post-classical China reached its pinnacle under the Tang (618-907). The capital city of Tang China was Chang'an, the eastern terminus of the Silk Road. This was important for the Tang economy, but it had an equally important effect on culture. Chang'an was a vast, cosmopolitan city which brought its inhabitants into close contact with foreigners from all over the world. Exposure to art forms from all over the world created an environment where new forms of painting, sculpture, porcelain and literature found expression. From eastern Persia came paintings of Polo matches; from India came Buddhist icons and statues of various Bodhisattva, to name just a few. These influences are evident in the art of the era. Of course, reverse pollination of culture occurred as well. The Chinese introduced fine porcelain into Mediterranean world, and later, the art of paper making and movable type. Tang artists are perhaps most well-known for sculpture and were world leaders in the molding of figurines of horses. In literature, the poet Li Bai (701-762) is remembered as one of the greatest men of letters of his time. He led an interesting life. Li was a member of the court, expelled for drunkenness and for writing romantic poetry about the emperor and his eunuch; then served the leader of the An Lushan Rebellion in 755 and was charged with treason, was pardoned and exiled; married four times and ended his life as a wandering poet. His poetry is known for its pedestrian tone, rich imagery and celebration of strong drink. As was the case in most monarchies, the crown

supported various forms of the arts, from calligraphy, to poetry, to metallurgy, to painting and the like. Royal support for the arts during the early Tang period was sustained and significant.

Mahayana Buddhism. Buddhism flourished during most of the Tang period. In the years since its founding in the 5th century BCE on the border between Nepal and India, Buddhism had slowly become more and more accepted in China. During the early Han period (206 BCE-220 CE), it was a religion with very few followers, in part because it had to compete with two other well-established religions: Confucianism and Daoism. Nonetheless, as it took on more and more Chinese characteristics, it slowly gained followers late in the Han period. In so doing, however, it looked less like the religion which had been an offshoot of Hinduism. We know the branch of Buddhism that flourished in Northeast Asia as Mahayana (greater vehicle) Buddhism. This is to distinguish it from Hinayana (lesser vehicle) Buddhism practiced in Southeast Asia.

State Support for Buddhism. Unlike Confucianism, Buddhism minimizes the importance of the temporal world and emphasizes the afterlife. It is therefore easy to understand that in the political chaos following the collapse of the Han in the 3rd century CE that this religion would naturally appeal to larger segments of the population. By the time of the early Tang period, it was a major religion, supported by the crown and given special tax and landholding privileges. However, state sanction of any religion is a problematic situation. A monarch can easily withdraw support, require the clergy to bless a poor decision or otherwise change the religious landscape in very short order. During the reign of the Empress Wu (624-705), the Confucians had been savage critics of her policies and, in particular, her usurpation of the throne. In an effort to undermine their authority, she moved the crown even closer to the Buddhist institutions. Upon her death, the special privileges they had enjoyed were stripped from them. Much of the land they had acquired over hundreds of years was taken and many of the temples themselves were shuttered. In the aftermath of the death of Empress Wu, the practice of Buddhism was not always proscribed by law, but it was clearly frowned upon.

Cultural Backlash. After Empress Wu, Tang China appears to have undergone a conservative backlash in more ways than just religion. The state removed some of the incentives that foreigners enjoyed in the capital city of Chang'an. It was also no longer legal to socialize with foreigners and many left China altogether or went to other cities. Buddhism, as an indisputably foreign religion, suffered as a result as well. And there was a state-sanctioned renaissance of Confucianism. In addition, the rich cultural expressions and outbursts of creativity that had characterized the early Tang period were found with less frequency.

The Mongol Interruption. During the Song period (960-1279), Chinese culture remained vibrant and strong. Indeed, Song period art objects are considered some of the most brilliant in all of Chinese history. However, Chinese culture was shattered by the Mongol invasions, particularly in the north where early fighting was intense and sustained. Though the Mongols did not seek to completely remake or destroy Chinese culture, an action they visited upon other conquered peoples, their influence on China was undeniable. There was a clear break between the culture and society of China before the Mongols and the culture and society of China after the Mongols.

Society

The Scholarly Tradition. Society in post-classical China functioned in much the same way as it had under the Han (206 BCE-220 CE). There were monarchs, aristocrats, artisans, clergy, peasants, laborers, etc. Each played their role in an organized and generally stable society. During the Tang period (618-907), another class of society emerged, the Confucian elite, sometimes also known as degree holders or Mandarins. These government officials helped society function as the population of China skyrocketed. They also created a custom known as the "scholarly tradition" in China, a concept that is well understood and highly valued in East Asia to this day. Scholars, or those with other specialized learning in China, are much more highly valued than in the western world. For hundreds of years in China, it was believed that society could neither function nor progress without learned, moral men to provide a philosophical framework for actions taken by the state. Service to the state and to the emperor was the highest calling to which a man could aspire.

Women in Post-Classical Society. Women, however, could not aspire to serve the state. The Confucian elites articulated a moral code which kept women both out of public service and even out of the public eye. If possible, it was the job of women to stay at home, take care of the household and prioritize either fathers, husbands or sons. Women's goals and aspirations were always secondary to those of the men around her. Strict adherence to this code

was complicated for peasants and laborers. Peasant women worked alongside their husbands in the fields and rice paddies.

Foot-binding. In the Song period (960-1279), if not before, there arose the custom of foot binding among those who could afford it. It is not clear why this particular activity began, but it had the effect of crippling any woman who had the misfortune of experiencing it. Late in childhood, girls' toes were doubled under the soles of their feet, bound tightly and kept there as their feet grew. This was a very painful ordeal. Over time, it retarded the growth of bones in the feet and created very small feet that were said to resemble the beauty of a golden lotus. Women with bound feet were unable to walk very far or engage in any sort of work which required them to stand for long periods of time. It was not possible to work in the fields or rice paddies. However, this condition conveyed status and made women more desirable for marriage. Though foot binding was outlawed in the early 20th century, it existed in the rural areas for another decade or so. Today, a tiny number of very elderly women with bound feet survive in China.

Concubinage and Polygamy. Women in China also had to endure the peculiar institution of concubinage. Concubines existed in all societies in the per-modern world. In China, it existed until outlawed in 1949. In general, girls who became concubines were from very humble origins. In this system, young women were sold by their father or older brother to a wealthy and powerful man. She would then become his sexual companion for life. The offspring of concubines were not afforded the same level of legal legitimacy that the children of first, second or third wives enjoyed and could not inherit unless no other heir existed, and most often not even then. However, they existed within a well-established legal framework and were not considered only sex slaves who could be discarded at will without cause. They were a part of the family and treated as such. Nonetheless, the young women sold into these situations rarely had a say in the decision to become a concubine. It was sometimes considered a badge of honor to have a daughter sold as a concubine to a wealthy, powerful man who could also provide financial assistance to the father's household as well. Nonetheless, the concept of free will for women in post-classical China was at best a secondary consideration.

Unmarried Men. It is not clear how large a percentage of women were concubines in post-classical China. However, the practice was widespread. One of the enduring problems in post-classical China was the lack of suitable women available to marry working class men. Polygamy and concubinage among elite men was at the root of the problem. Poor, unmarried men who were never able to marry and start a household of their own were destined to remain on the periphery of society and often became law breakers and trouble makers.

Economy

Grand Engineering Projects. In post-classical China, the Sui (589-618) and Tang (618-907) Dynasties are well known for supporting massive and important infrastructure projects. Some, such as the Grand Canal reshaped the economy of China. The Grand Canal ran north to south linking several major river systems, the Qiantang River near Hangzhou in the south, Yangtze River a little further north, the Yellow River in Shandong province and finally the Hai River near Beijing in the north. It spans 6 modern provinces and is more than 1100 miles long, the longest man made river in the world. Portions of it are still in use today for transporting commerce. The Grand Canal was so important to the economy of China for more than a thousand years and was such a monumental feat of engineering in the post-classical world that it has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage by the United Nations alongside such sites as the Great Pyramids of Egypt, the Acropolis in Greece and the Forbidden City. Though China is known historically for its macro-economic regions, the Grand Canal made possible for the first time the transportation of bulk goods from the densely populated regions of the south to the more sparsely populated regions of the north. This created a functioning, national economy. Rice and other food stuffs, in particular, are well known for being transported in bulk along the Grand Canal. This waterway was so important that if it silted over, which it did from time to time after Yellow River floods, emperors are well known for throwing enormous resources at dredging projects for fear of losing the Mandate of Heaven. In time of war, disabling the Grand Canal which your enemy was using to transport supplies could lead to victory. This project was started in antiquity, but was completed under the Sui. It is one of the reasons that the economy under the Tang grew so fast and was so strong.

Security. The southern areas of post-classical China produced far more rice and other food stuffs than could be consumed in the region. This was facilitated because the crown supported the dispersal of knowledge of advances in agriculture such as crop and field rotation, the use of fertilizers and the like. Irrigation and flood control projects both in the south and the north were high priorities. The Tang are known for rebuilding the system of roads that had

been left to decay since antiquity. In addition, the Tang took seriously the problem of security and sought to end enduring problems with banditry and the like. They built post-stations along the most important roads and waterways to maintain law and order. The basis for taxation was land and not goods produced on the land. This simplified the tax system and made land-owners, not peasants, largely responsible to the authorities. All of these things contributed to a thriving economy.

The Pax Mongolica. The above mentioned initiatives were all labor intensive and required constant monitoring. Law and order, stability and peace, above all, were required to maintain an effective nationwide economy. When this period of relative peace came to an end with the Mongol invasions, the economy of north China disintegrated. Tens of millions of people in the north were removed from the work force and the population collapsed. Of course, the Silk Road thrived under the Mongols. For the first time in history, it was possible for someone with permission from one of the Mongol monarchs to travel without harassment from Beijing all the way through Persia to Europe and back. Silk, porcelain and tea were particularly valued commodities in Europe. Marco Polo from Venice and others such as the historian Rashid Al Din are well known for having made the trip. Of course, the Pax Mongolica was relatively short lived and came at a tremendous cost. Domestically, the Mongols ruled China after the conquest using many of the same Confucian elites who has served the Song (960-1279) and so, after the recovery, maintained the economy at a diminished, but sufficient level.

Economic Recovery under the Ming. When the Ming came to power after the ouster of the Mongols in 1368, the economy of China returned to its traditional boundaries. The Silk Road was no longer safe and freely accessible. The economy in China, though smaller, continued to thrive. Agriculture existed much as it always had. Peasants worked the land, some as free-holders, others tied to the land as something like serfs. In the devastated and depopulated areas of the north, the first Ming emperors provided incentives for peasants to resettle and return land to cultivation. Road and canals were rebuilt and irrigation projects were again prioritized. For a century or so, the economy of Ming China grew dramatically. China prospered.

Readings

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R. W. L. Guisso, *Wu Tse-T'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in Tang China,* (Western Washington University Press, 1978).

Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History,* (Oxford, 2012).

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Questions for Discussion

1) The concept of "China" has endured since antiquity. What does this mean? What are the criteria one uses when describing China? Is the concept of "China" defined by geography, religion, language, philosophy, culture—or something else altogether? Or is the concept of "China" largely a myth which the founder of each dynasty used to legitimize their rule? What meaning, if any, does this concept have for contemporary China?

2) The Chinese Civil Service examination system lasted for more than 1000 years. It served the interests of the monarchs of the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. What about it contributed to its longevity? What was so important about it that both indigenous and foreign rulers alike used it to staff their bureaucracies? To what extent could it be or has it been used as a model for staffing civil services in other parts of the world?

3) The Confucian elites in post-classical China were furious at Empress Wu of the Tang Dynasty. Yes, she usurped the throne. However, others have done this many times and are not so reviled in history. What about Empress Wu's actions were so intolerable to the Confucian elites? Why have so few other women in China been able to participate in the public sphere? Were the Confucian elites acting out of a sense of religious obligation? Were they acting to protect their own prerogatives? Or were they motivated by something else altogether?

4) The Mongols were a military juggernaut in the post-classical world. They conquered virtually any and all civilizations they encountered. To what extent did the Mongols influence Chinese society? Was their influence lasting or permanent, or was the Yuan Dynasty merely a "bump in the road?" Did they treat China any differently than they treated other conquered civilizations? Were the Mongols assimilated into Chinese civilization, as was the case with most foreign dynasties, or were they able to maintain their own cultural identity? If yes, why were they different than other foreign dynasties? If not, what happened to make assimilation possible?

Texts

1) The poet Li Bai, 8th Century China, translated by Arthur Waley

> The fields are chill, the sparse rain has stopped;
> The colors of spring teem on every side.
> With leaping fish the blue pond is full;
> With singing thrushes the green boughs droop.
> The flowers of the field have dabbled their powdered cheeks;
> The mountain grasses are bent level at the waist.
> By the bamboo stream the last fragment of cloud
> Blown by the wind slowly scatters away.

2) Short story about two men taking the Civil Service Examination in Tang China, translated by Clara Yu, found in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook.* (Free Press, 1993), pg. 130.

> Xu Tang was from Jing county of Xuanshou and had been taking the examinations since he was young. In the same village there was a man named Wang Zun, who had served as a minor government clerk when young. After Xu Tang had taken the examination more than twenty times, Wang Zun was still but a low functionary in the government. Yet, Wang Zun wrote good poetry, although no one knew about it because he kept it secret.
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> One day, Wang Zun resigned from his post and set out for the capital to take the imperial examination. As he was approaching the capital, he met Xu Tang, who was seeing some friends off at the outskirts of the city. "Eh," Xu Tang asked him, "what are you doing here in the capital?"
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> "I have come to take the imperial examination," answered the former functionary.
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> Upon hearing this, Xu Tang angrily declared "How insolent you are, you lowly clerk!" Although they were not fellow candidates for the imperial examination, Xu Tang treated him with contempt. But in the end, Wang Zun passed the examination and became very famous. Xu Tang did not pass until five years later.

3) "On Plowing," a quotation from 1159 during the Song period, from a treatise on farming. Translated by Clara Yu, found in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook.* (Free Press, 1993), pg. 189.

> Early and late plowing both have their advantages. For the early rice crop, as soon as the reaping is completed, immediately plow the fields and expose the stalks to glaring sunlight. Then add manure and bury the stalks to nourish the soil. Next plant beans, wheat and vegetables to ripen and fertilize the soil so as to minimize the next year's labor. In addition, when the harvest is good, these extra crops can add to the yearly income. For late crops, however, do not plow until spring. Because the rice stalks are soft but tough, it is necessary to wait until they have fully decayed to plow satisfactorily.
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> In the Mountains, plateaus, and wet areas, it is usually cold. The fields here should be deeply plowed and soaked with water released from the reservoirs. Throughout the winter, the water will be absorbed and the snow and frost will freeze the soil so that it will become brittle and crumbly. At the beginning of spring, spread the fields with decayed weeds and leaves and then burn them so that the soil will become warm enough for the seeds to sprout. In the way, cold as the freezing springs may be, they cannot harm the crop. If you fail to treat the soil this way, then the arteries of the fields, being soaked constantly by freezing springs, will be cold, and the crop will be poor.