Chapter 11: Central and Eastern Asia 400 – 1200

1. The Sui, Tang, and Song Dynasties 581-755
	1. After the fall of the Han Dynasty, China is fragmented into small kingdoms
	2. Some of these were Confucian, others were influenced by Tibetan, Turkic, or other cultures
2. Reunification Under the Sui and Tang
	1. The Sui Dynasty reunified China and reestablished Confucianism
	2. Strong political influence of Buddhism
	3. New capital city: Chang’an
	4. **Grand Canal:** 1,100 mile long canal linking the Yellow River in Northern China with the Yangzi River in Southern China
	5. Made improvement to the Great Wall
	6. Waged massive military campaigns against Korea and Vietnam
	7. The speed and size of their growth eventually led to their downfall
	8. The Tang Dynasty took power in 618
	9. Expanded westward into Central Asia
	10. Military leader was **Li Shimin**
	11. Allowed local nobles and officials significant power
	12. Tang emperors were descendants of Turkic elites
3. Buddhism and Tang Empire
	1. Kings and emperors spiritual function: to bring humankind to the Buddhist realm
	2. Spirits would protect the realm and prevent harm to those living under a just ruler
	3. The most popular form of Buddhism was called *Mahayana* (Great Vehicle) Buddhism
		1. Fostered faith in enlightened beings who postpone Nirvana to help others achieve it
		2. This permitted the absorption of many local gods into Mahayana sainthood
		3. Also encouraged the translation of Buddhist scriptures into local languages
		4. Appealed to many people and societies because of its openness
	4. Buddhist monasteries would support princes who competed for power
		1. Often, this meant heavy financial support
		2. In return, the monasteries received tax exemptions, land, and gifts
	5. The spread of Buddhism was fostered by the growth of empires and trade
	6. Chang’an became the center of a continent wide system of communication
		1. Visitors from Central Asia, Tibet, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea all came to hear about the most recent ideas and styles in Tang religion, philosophy, and the arts
4. To Chang’an by Land and Sea
	1. **Tributary system**: Practice in which independent countries acknowledged the supremacy of the emperor based in China by sending regular emissaries to the capital to pay *tribute*



*Tribute*: Payments of coinage, food, or other elaborate gifts as a showing of support and inferiority to a superior power.

Think about that one scene in *300*. You know the one…

*“All the God-King Xerxes requires is this: A simple offering of earth and water, a token of Sparta’s submission to the will of Xerxes.”*

* 1. Over one million citizens in this empire, mostly in suburbs around major urban areas
	2. Due to the Silk Road, sea routes, and the Grand Canal, Chang’an was a major economic force
	3. The Grand Canal was so important that it had its own military force and budget
	4. Control of coastal southern China allowed for access to the Indian Ocean
		1. This led to the spread of Islamic and Jewish influence in western China
	5. Chinese sailors were well known for their skills in compass design and ship building
		1. Ships designed to trade with the Philippines and Southeast Asia were twice as large as those used by the Byzantine and Abbasid Empires
	6. **Bubonic Plague**: Arrive in East Asia through trade with North Africa
		1. Contained more effectively than it was in Europe
1. Tang Integration
	1. Influences coming from Central Asia and the Islamic World
	2. China lost its monopoly on silk but began growing its own cotton, tea, and sugar
	3. The Tang dynasty was a major exporter of goods, creating vast amounts of wealth
	4. Became the only supplier of porcelain in the world
	5. The desire for these luxury goods increased the amount of long-distance trade
2. Fractured Power in Central Asia and China
	1. After two centuries of wide-spread Buddhist influence, the imperial family began to distrust the Buddhist monasteries and blame them for political problems
	2. In 840 the government moved to crush the influence of Buddhist monasteries
	3. This was followed by the reassertion of Confucian ideology by Tang elites
	4. This new period of Confucian dominance in China is called “Neo-Confucianism”
	5. Many felt that Buddhism was an example of “barbarians” ruining their society
		1. Under Buddhism, men and women were required to give up desires in this world in order to achieve enlightenment
		2. This meant that people could be exempt from taxes and military service
		3. This meant forsaking the well being of the family and the importance of ancestors, something contrary to basic Confucian teachings
	6. Buddhism also changed the role of women in politics
		1. Buddhism seemed to undermine the idea that the state was a “family”
		2. This was demonstrated by Wu Zhao, a woman who had married into the imperial family, seized control of the government, and declared herself emperor
		3. Confucian scholars told terrible (though untrue) stories about powerful women in order to cast them in a negative light
3. The End of the Tang Empire
	1. Long period of unrest as many rebellions happen that weaken the empire
	2. In addition, conquering armies are stopped in Central Asia, halting their expansion
	3. The Tang Empire ended in 907 and broke into several smaller states