Imperial China

Dynasties and Dragons
The Mandate of Heaven

- A Chinese political and religious doctrine used since ancient times to justify the rule of the Emperor of China. Similar to the Medieval European “Divine Right of Kings”.

- The Mandate of Heaven was relevant from ancient times, until the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911.

- According to this belief, heaven (天, Tian)—which embodies the natural order and will of the universe—bestows the mandate on a just ruler of China, the “Heavenly Son” of the “Celestial Empire”.

- If a ruler was overthrown, this was interpreted as an indication that the ruler was unworthy, and had lost the mandate.
Confucius (551-479 BCE)

- A Chinese teacher, editor, politician, and philosopher of the Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history.

- Confucianism emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity.

- He championed strong family loyalty, ancestor veneration, and respect of elders by their children and of husbands by their wives, recommending family as a basis for ideal government. He espoused the well-known principle “Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself”, the Golden Rule.
Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE)

- Qin Shi Huang was the first emperor of China
- Used Legalism to consolidate wealth and power, and increase order, security and stability
- Qin Shi Huang was a tyrant and obsessed on immortality
- Buried with over 7,000 life-sized terra-cotta warriors
Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

- The Emperor was at the pinnacle of society
- The “Golden Age” of Ancient China
- Tried to improve government by creating a civil service examination system
- Paper was invented, also advancements in math and science
Six Dynasties Period (220-581 CE)

- Period of instability following the fall of the Han Dynasty
- Buddhism introduced to China
Sui Dynasty (581-618 CE)

- Short-lived but ambitious dynasty (much like the Qin)
- Civil service exams continued
- Two major emperors: Sui Wendi and Sui Yangdi
- Sui Wendi removed private armies, lowered taxes and redistributed land
- Yangdi completed the Grand Canal but was a tyrant; he was murdered in 618 while returning from a failed campaign in Korea
Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)

- Became the richest, most sophisticated nation at the time
- Government: Aristocracy
- Civil service exams continued
- Booming trade along the Silk Road
- Buddhism spreads quickly
- Advancements in literature and art
- Other countries (like Japan and Korea) seek to imitate
Song Dynasty (960-1279)

- Government: meritocracy
- Civil service exams continued
- Many innovations in science, engineering and technology
- Massive urbanization
- Military was not very strong
Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)

- The Yuan were MONGOLS!
- Relied on family members, friends, and trusted foreigners to help run the government
- No civil service exams
- Trade and cultural exchanges flourished
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

- Restored the civil service system
- Innovation was not encouraged
- Early Emperors encouraged maritime explorers, such as Zheng He
- Late Emperors tried to close China off to foreign influence
- Built Forbidden City
- Completed The Great Wall
Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)

• Opened trade with the West

• The Opium Wars, fought between 1839-1860, ended with British forces forcing the opium trade upon China

• The Boxer Rebellion, an uprising between 1899-1901, was fought in opposition to foreign influence, including Christianity and opium.

• The Last Emperor Puyi was a child, when the Qing were overthrown
Republic of China 1912-1949

- The Chinese Revolution of 1911, ended over 2,000 years of dynastic rule in China.
- The Republic of China was declared in 1 January 1912.
- Sun Yat-sen was the Republic’s founding father and first provisional president.
- The Republic of China was founded on the principles of nationalism and modernization.
- The Second Sino-Japanese War, a theater in WWII, left China war torn and unstable.
- The Republic of China still exists in Taiwan.
People’s Republic 1949–present

• China was in a Civil War between 1945–1949, fought between the Republic of China and Communist Party of China.

• On 21 September 1949, Chairman Mao proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, in Tiananmen Square.

• The Great Leap Forward was a large-scale economic and social reform project between 1958–1961, resulting in about 45 million deaths by starvation.

• The Cultural Revolution, a massive sociopolitical movement, was launched in 1966 in order to preserve true communism.

• In 1989, thousands of students took to Tiananmen Square to protest lack of freedoms and censorship, which resulted in (at least) several hundred deaths by armed soldiers.