

Ancient Civilizations of Asia—China

Section 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. After the Han dynasty, China fell into disorder but was reunified by new dynasties.
2. Cities and trade grew during the Tang and Song dynasties.
3. The Tang and Song dynasties produced fine arts and inventions.

Key Terms and Places

Grand Canal a canal linking northern and southern China

Kaifeng capital of the Song dynasty

porcelain a thin, beautiful pottery invented by the Chinese

woodblock printing a form of printing in which an entire page is carved into a block of wood that is covered with ink and then pressed against paper to make a copy of the page

gunpowder a mixture of powders used in guns and explosives

compass an instrument that uses the earth's magnetic field to indicate direction

Section Summary

DISORDER AND REUNIFICATION

China broke apart into several kingdoms after the fall of the Han dynasty. This time period, sometimes known as the Period of Disunion, ended with the rise of the Sui dynasty in 589. Around this time, work was soon started on the **Grand Canal**, a system of waterways linking northern and southern China. The Sui dynasty, which did not last long, was followed by the Tang dynasty, which lasted nearly 300 years. This period was considered a golden age for China, with military reform, new law codes, and advances in art. The Song dynasty followed the Tang dynasty after a short period of disorder. The Song, like the Tang, ruled for about 300 years, and brought about many great achievements.

Under what dynasty was work on the Grand Canal begun?

CITIES AND TRADE

Chinese cities grew and flourished as the trade centers of the Tang and Song dynasties. Chang'an (chahng-AHN), with a population of more than a

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million people, was by far the largest city in the world at the time. Several other cities, including **Kaifeng**, the Song capital, had about a million people. Traders used the Grand Canal, a series of waterways that linked major cities, to ship goods and agricultural products throughout China.

Foreign trade used both land routes and sea routes. China's Pacific ports were open to foreign traders. Chinese exports included tea, rice, spices, and jade. Especially prized by foreigners, however, were silk and **porcelain**. The method of making silk was kept secret for centuries.

Why do you think the Chinese did not want foreigners to know how to make silk?

ARTS AND INVENTIONS

The Tang dynasty produced some of China's greatest artists and writers, including the poets Li Bo and Du Fu, and the Buddhist painter Wu Daozi (DOW-tzee). The Song dynasty produced Li Qingzhao (ching-ZHOW), perhaps China's greatest female poet. Artists of the Tang and Song dynasties created exquisite objects in clay, particularly porcelain items with a pale green glaze called celadon (SEL-uh-duhn).

Use the Internet or a library to find a poem by Li Bo.

The Tang and Song dynasties produced some of the most remarkable—and important—inventions in human history. The world's oldest-known printed book, using **woodblock printing**, was printed in China in 868. Later, during the Song dynasty, the Chinese invented movable type for printing. The Song dynasty also introduced the world's first paper money. Two other inventions include **gunpowder** and the **compass**.

What printing technology ultimately superseded woodblock printing?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Create a document showing an exchange of goods between a Song dynasty Chinese trader and a foreign merchant.