

# Dynasties of China

**Han (202 B.C. – A.D. 220):** During this long dynasty, there were four hundred years of prosperity and growth. Land was added to make China's boundaries almost like they are today. Han culture was as wonderful as Roman culture, which was flourishing at the same time. Contact was made between China and the countries around the Mediterranean Sea. The Silk Road helped with trade. China traded silk for Roman glass. Paper, the wheelbarrow, the seismograph, and the sundial (a clock that tells time using the sun and shadows) were all invented at this time.

**Ming (A.D. 1368 – 1644):** This was a pretty peaceful time when Chinese culture began to thrive (do well) again. Many novels were written. Famous white porcelain vases painted in fancy blue designs were traded all over the world. The navy sailed as far away as the east African coast. Over 60 ships and 28,000 men visited China by boat. In 1514, the Portuguese helped China to begin trading with the world.

**Qin (221 – 210 B.C.):** Even though this was a short dynasty, it was very important. All of eastern China was controlled by this dynasty. Classic books were burned and some scholars who followed Confucius' ideas were buried alive. The Great Wall of China as begun in 214 B.C. to keep out invaders. Money, measures, and weights were all standardized. Many roads and palaces were built. Chopsticks came into use. The first compass was designed.

**Qing/Manchu (A.D. 1644 – 1911):** This is the last dynasty in China's history. It was controlled by leaders from Manchuria. These foreign leaders followed Chinese government ways. But they made the native Chinese people wear a queue (ponytail). Anyone who wore a ponytail was disgraced and controlled by someone else. The empire expanded for 150 years. Things were great. But people stopped changing and trying new things. This caused problems. The Opium War (1840-1842), the Taiping Rebellion (1850), the Boxer Rebellion (1900), and the internal corruption of the government eventually led to its downfall in 1911. From 1912 until the present, China has been a communist country.

**Shang (1766 – 1122 B.C.):** This society emphasized farming. There were a lot of wars going on during this time. Bronze was used a lot for weapons and religious containers. Chariots (horse-drawn carts) were used during battles. An advanced writing system was developed. People began to worship their ancestors.

**Song (A.D. 960 – 1279):** The Chinese Empire was reunified. Printed books were sold for the first time. Enamel, a clear glaze, was discovered. Porcelain (a fine and expensive type of clay) was used to make beautiful art pieces such as dolls and vases. Fireworks began to be popular. In 1234, the Mongols began to invade the south.

**Sui (A.D. 589 – 618):** All the land that was lost during the last dynasty was taken back. The Grand Canal was built. Tests were given to figure out who was best to hire for government jobs.

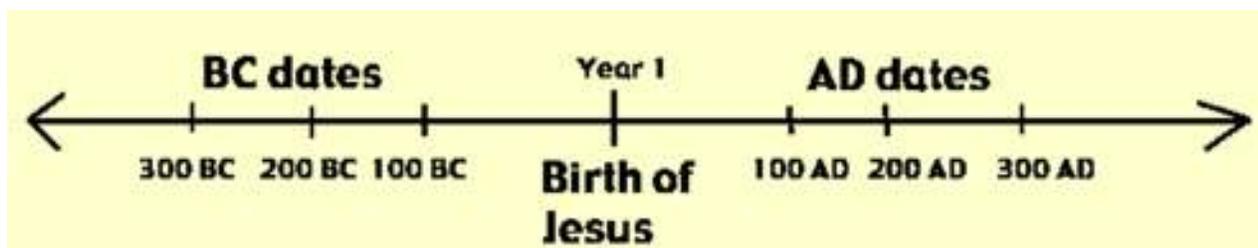
**T'ang (A.D. 618 – 906):** This is the greatest dynasty in China's history. Culture was very important during this time. The oldest book with a printed date was written in 868. Poetry was popular. Religious tolerance allowed many faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism) to be practiced in China. Landscape and figure painting were very popular. Very beautiful palaces and garden were designed and built. The strange practice of foot binding began during this time. Women's feet were tied up so that they wouldn't grow very big. They were considered more elegant and feminine that way.

**Xia (2200 – 1766 B.C.):** During this dynasty, animals were domesticated (tamed), farming was organized, and silkworms began to be raised to produce silk.

**Yuan/Mongol (A.D. 1279 – 1368):** Kublai Khan and his group of soldiers controlled China in 1279. Marco Polo, the famous explorer, hung out with government leaders. Drama (plays) were very popular with the people at his time.

**Zhou (1122 – 221 B.C.):** City-states fought each other. Barbarians invaded from the west and north. Irrigation and iron tools improved farming. Multiplication tables were invented. Confucius, a great Chinese philosopher, was famous during this time.

## TIMELINES:



**B.C.** does stand for “before Christ.” **A.D.** actually stands for the Latin phrase *anno domini*, which means “in the year of our Lord.” In recent times, there has been a push to replace the **B.C.** and **A.D.** labels with **B.C.E.** and **C.E.**, meaning “before common era” and “common era,” respectively.