Historical China through Ming Dynasty (221 BC-1644 CE)
The Traditional Economy
Econ 43750

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Outline

1. Kissinger chapter 1–presentation template
2. Circle back for more detailed discussion
3. The traditional economy
Key themes

1. Inward looking. Uninterested in the larger world.
2. Rulers interested in staying in power.
3. Relatively wealthy, highly developed civilization promoted view of Chinese exceptionalism
4. China declines when Europe was rising. Humiliation by the West and Japan.
5. Xi Jinping wants to return China to rightful place of “greatness”
Some key dates and names

Dates
- 221 BCE Unification (Qin Shi Huang)
- 1911 Xinhua Revolution (Sun-Yat Sen, Chiang Kai Shek, Mao Zedong)
- 1949 Communist Revolution
- 1976 Mao dies
- 1978 Economic reforms (Deng Xiaoping)
- 1989 Tianamen square

Key Leaders of Modern China (Surname first)
- Deng Xiaoping 1978-1992
- Jiang Zemin 1993-2001
- Hu Jintao 2003-2012
- Xi Jingping 2013-present
Chinese civilization seems to have no beginning.
- Competing warring kingdoms
- Scant written history
- Myths and legends abound

Unification by Qin 221 BC

Geographic inaccessibility. Ocean, Himalayas, desert. China knew about India, the Roman empire, but didn’t get to know.

Advanced nautical technology (Zheng He)

Confucian philosophy

Chinese exceptionalism
- Superior civilization, not for export but let others come to seek ideas.
- Non Chinese people were barbarians

Sun Tzu’s Art of War. Barbarian management. Military conquest not their comparative advantage (people mostly farmers, civil servants memorizing Confucian texts)
Confucius lived 551-479 BC, during a turbulent time.
- His ideas were about societal norms and rules. Proper behavior among people.
- Does not talk about God or the afterlife. Not a religion.
- Strict hierarchy of superiors and inferiors
The Confucian system

   - Son of Heaven lives a scrupulous life and is held responsible for disasters, bad harvests, and the like.
   - Heaven withdraws mandate from bad ruler. People are then allowed to revolt.
   - What is heaven? It's where the ancestors went after they died. Evidently everyone gains admission. Everyone happy there.

2. Family hierarchy
   - Father at the top
   - Eldest son obeys the father
   - Younger son obeys older son
   - Wife obeys the husband
   - DIL obeys MIL

3. Bottom line: Strong national leader, strong family leader. Family and nation is more important than individual's wants and desires.
Circle back additional discussion: Qin Emperor

Warring States 476-221 BCE. Then “Unified” by Qin 221 BCE
Qin Emperor
Qin Emperor
Qin Emperor: What else is he famous for?

1. Enslaved the nation. Either grow food, work on the Wall, or assigned to military. Brutal guy
2. Made Xian the capital
3. Established enduring governance structure
   - Partition country into 36 provinces, administered by appointed governors.
   - Governors collected taxes for central government, conscript soldiers and labor for public works
4. Conducted the first census (for tax collection)
5. Burned the Confucian texts, and probably many of the scholars
6. Standardized currency, weights, measures, written language.
Sun Tzu’s Art of War

- Came to be used under Han rulers.
- Used to manage the barbarians, keep them divided
- Place premium on psychological advantage over military
- Avoid direct conflict
- Undermine enemy’s morale
- Try to defeat enemy with minimum of fighting
Han Dynasty 206 BC–202 CE

1. Freed the people from slavery. A relatively prosperous era. Population increased. Hence the term Han Chinese.
2. Maintained, expanded Qin centralized government.
3. Confucianism becomes the state philosophy.
4. Introduced exam system based on Confucian texts for civil service jobs.
   - Origins of Chinese people’s respect for education.
   - Gateway to the gentry, escape harsh life of physical labor.
5. Advanced technology
   - Paper (50 AD)
   - Advancements in iron smelting. Good for making tools, and ploughs pulled by oxen.
   - Seismonitor (detect earthquakes)
   - Negative numbers (mathematical sophistication)
   - Anesthesia
Economy

1. Agriculture (Naughton calls traditional economy).
   - Intensive application of labor to small land plots. High land productivity, low labor productivity. \( \text{APL} > \text{MPL} \approx 0 \).
   - Developed early-ripening rice. Two crops per year
   - Irrigation projects
   - Organic fertilizer (poop)

2. River system used to conduct commerce

3. Dense population conducive to markets.

4. Competitive markets
   - No aristocracy. No special advantage through birthrights. Socially mobile society. Contrast inheritance system with Europe.
   - Sophisticated institutions
     - Widespread use of money, even paper currency
     - Rule of law–established contract law, good for business.
     - Merchant associations
   - Manufactured goods, done by households, not firms. Artisans. Small scale production.
Chinese people viewed the country to be center of world.

China did not export ideas, but let others come to seek them (Kissinger).

Chinese viewed theirs as superior civilization. All others were barbarians. Chinese court aware of India, Roman empire, but uninterested.
Why do dynasties change?

- Lose mandate of heaven
- Bad management, bad harvests, poor treatment of peasants, famine, oppressive taxation
Foreign invasions

- Illustrates superiority of Chinese society, culture, and governance.
- Foreign conquerors became Chinese, rather than trying to change China. Shows how deep the identity and culture and institutional makeup of the society is.
- Mongols (Yuan dynasty 1271-1368)
  - Gengis Kahn. Not enough grass for animals to graze. Went to China
  - “No greater joy than to massacre one’s enemies, steal their horses and cattle, and rape their women.”
  - Died when a princess got revenge by castrating him
  - Kublai Kahn- Gengis’s grandson. Took the Chinese name Yuan
- Manchurians (Qing overthrew Ming) 1644-19192
Trade and exploration

China, mostly inward looking. Outward looking during a short window.

- **Zheng He 1371-1433** (Admiral during Ming dynasty) A eunuch. What dat?
  - Practice began 6th century BC as punishment for criminals, prisoners of war. Castrate and remove penis, forced into work in imperial court. (European castration was just removal of testicles)
  - Over time, demand for eunuch services increased and practice became voluntary, as condition for employment. Pathway to better material life, but there are tradeoffs
  - Why? Emperor had 000’s of concubines
  - Candidate given opium, genitals washed with hot pepper water, then whack! Takes 100 days to heal
  - Eunuchs had reputation for being power hungry, conniving (must be self-selection). Also, smelled bad, because they could not direct their urine flow.
Zheng He

- Commanded huge fleet, 28000 sailors
- 7 expeditions to extrade trade, economic relationships. A tributary system.
- Went to south-east Asia, India, Middle east and Africa
- The emperor died. Next Ming emperor ended it all, had the fleet dismantled.
- Abandoned seafaring at exactly the time the Portugese started exploring, then the British

1. End of Ming, due to corruption (23,000 people, many family, on the Imperial court payroll). Bankrupted the government, famine. Overthrown by the Qing, from Manchuria.

Zheng He’s Ship