Lesson 2

MAIN IDEAS

1. **Government** The Tang Dynasty built a powerful imperial state. This efficient government continued under the Song Dynasty.

2. **Economics** Tang and Song China had a strong economy based on trade and farming.

3. **Science and Technology** Under the Tang and Song, the Chinese developed technologies that influenced the world.

TAKING NOTES

**Reading Skill: Finding Main Ideas**

As you read each section of Lesson 2, look for essential information about the main ideas. Record this essential information on a cluster diagram like the one shown below.

![Cluster Diagram]

**Tang and Song China**

- Economy
- Technology
- Imperial state

1. 
2. 
1. 
2. 

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CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

- 7.3.2 Describe agricultural, technological, and commercial developments during the Tang and Song periods.
- 7.3.5 Trace the historic influence of such discoveries as tea, the manufacture of paper, wood-block printing, the compass, and gunpowder.
- 7.3.6 Describe the development of the imperial state and the scholar-official class.
- Framework Students should analyze the economic foundations of this society in the conversion of the jungle regions of the Yangtze valley into productive rice paddies.
Advances Under the Tang and Song

Build on What You Know  As Lesson 1 explained, the Sui Dynasty reunited China. In 618, the Tang Dynasty succeeded the Sui. The Tang rulers faced the task of keeping the recently reunified China together. They also wanted to hold onto their newly gained power.

Building the Imperial State

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How was the Chinese government organized under the Tang and Song dynasties?

Ruling a vast country like China was a difficult task. To rule more efficiently, the Tang rulers developed an imperial state. **Imperial** means related to an empire.

The Tang used several ideas they had learned from the Sui Dynasty to set up this organized, well-run government. For the most part, Tang central and local government and military organization followed Sui models. In addition, the Tang used the Sui tax system. They even made the Sui capital—the city of Ch’ang-an on the Wei River—their capital. (See the map on page 217.) Ch’ang-an was important because it was located on major trade routes.

Calligraphy  This document shows one skill that all Chinese government officials had—calligraphy. The ability to write Chinese characters was the sign of an educated person.
**Chinese Government**  The Tang government was like a pyramid. An emperor ruled at the top, and many people served in various levels below him. The emperor’s chief advisers served him directly. They were the second-highest level of the pyramid.

Below those advisers was the bureaucracy. A **bureaucracy** is a government that is divided into departments. Each department in China was in charge of a certain area, such as taxes, agriculture, or the army. This political system ruled all of China. Local governments throughout China had to report to the central bureaucracy.

**A Law Code**  Tang rulers created a new code of law. It listed all of the laws of China so that the same laws would be used everywhere. This new code proved highly effective. China used it from about 624 until the late 1200s.

**Scholar-Officials**  The Tang needed to educate people to work in the bureaucracy. For many jobs in the bureaucracy, people had to take an exam given by the government. The Han and Sui dynasties had also given exams to job seekers, but the Tang rulers greatly expanded the system. The state exam tested knowledge of Confucian ideas, poetry, and other subjects. The test was long and difficult. Most people who took it failed.

A person who passed the state exam could become a **scholar-official**, an educated person with a government position. Almost all scholar-officials came from the upper class. Most wealthy people had relatives who worked in government. In China, relatives often helped each other get jobs. Also, only rich people could afford the education needed to pass the test.

**The Song Dynasty**  After the Tang, the Song Dynasty ruled from 960 to 1279. The Song Dynasty expanded and improved the exam system. It set up more schools and changed the exam to cover more practical subjects. More people took the exams, passed them, and got government jobs. Even so, most officials continued to come from rich families with political influence.

**REVIEW**  What were the features of the Chinese government during the Tang and Song dynasties?

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**Confucius**  Confucius taught a system of ethics and morals. Chinese rulers thought that people who studied these ideas made good government officials.
Prosperity from Trade and Farming

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** On what was China’s economy based during the Tang and Song periods?

Under Tang and Song rule, China’s economy grew. In fact, China became the wealthiest and most developed nation in the world. One factor in this growth was an improved transport system.

**Changes in Travel and Trade** The Tang and Song governments built many roads and waterways. This transportation system helped tie the Chinese empire together.

Better transportation improved trade. Traders used the new roads to move grain, tea, and other goods. Along the roads were inns in which travelers could stay. Mounted messengers and runners carried government mail on the roads. This improved communication.

Waterways were just as important. The government repaired old canals and built new ones to link major rivers. The resulting network of waterways provided an efficient way to move goods and people.

Trade was also improved by several technological developments. These developments included gigantic ships powered by both oars and sails. Such ships made sea voyages faster and safer. The development of the magnetic compass, too, improved travel on the open seas.
Changes in Agriculture  Around A.D. 1000, Chinese farmers began planting a new type of rice from Southeast Asia. This rice ripened faster than the type they had used before. With the new rice, farmers could raise two or even three crops a year instead of one. The food supply expanded rapidly, allowing the population to grow to about 100 million.

During Tang and Song times, the Chinese turned areas of the Chang Jiang valley into productive rice paddies, or fields. Farmers used pumps and canals to drain water from marshes. They built terraces on hillsides and used elaborate irrigation systems to water them. By changing their environment, the Chinese farmers gained cropland. Additional land enabled them to grow more rice.

These changes and a mild climate allowed southern China to grow more rice than the people in that region needed. Farmers sold the extra rice to merchants, who shipped it by canal to imperial centers in northern China. Having extra food meant that fewer people needed to work as farmers. As a result, more people could work in trade.

Terraced Rice Fields

1. Chinese farmers moved massive amounts of soil to change the slope of a hillside into a series of level steps.

2. Then the farmers constructed a ridge of earth along the rim of each terrace.

3. Finally, they flooded the new fields before planting rice seedlings. Rice is generally grown in about four inches of water.
Changes in Commerce  By the Song period, trade was thriving in China. Barges and cargo ships carried goods on canals and rivers and along the coastline of China. They also brought Chinese foods and other products to foreign lands, such as Korea and Japan.

The growth of trade led to a rapid expansion in the use of money, in the form of coins, to pay for goods. However, large numbers of coins were heavy and difficult to carry. To solve this problem, Tang and Song governments began to print paper money. They were the first governments in history to do so.

As trade increased, more people became merchants. China’s merchant class lived mainly in cities and towns, where most private trade took place. The cities grew and prospered. By the Song period, China had a few cities with populations of about 1,000,000 people. In contrast, Paris, one of Europe’s largest cities, had only 150,000 people at the time.

What brought about the change to a money economy during China’s Tang and Song dynasties?

A Time of Brilliant Achievements

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  What technological advances were made under the Tang and Song dynasties?

The Tang and Song dynasties were among the most creative periods in China’s long history. Poetry and art, in particular, flourished during this time.

A Golden Age for Poetry and Art  Three Tang writers—Li Bai, Du Fu, and Wang Wei—are considered among the greatest Chinese poets of all time. Li Bai wrote about life’s pleasures. In his poetry, Du Fu praised orderliness and Confucian values. And Wang Wei wrote of the beauty of nature and the briefness of life. (To read one of Wang Wei’s poems, see the Primary Source feature on the next page.)

Tang artists produced beautiful pottery figurines. During Song times, landscape painting became an important art form. Song painters used only black ink—in every shade from pale grey to the darkest black. As one Song artist noted, “Black is ten colors.” Today, Tang pottery figurines and Song landscape paintings can be found in museums around the world.
“On Being Demoted and Sent Away to Qizhou”

By Wang Wei

How easy for a lowly official to offend and now I’m demoted and must go north. In my work I sought justice but the wise emperor disagreed. I pass houses and roads by the riverside and villages deep in a sea of clouds. Even if one day I come back, white age will have invaded my hair.

1. demoted: forced to take a lower-ranking job.
2. justice: moral rightness, fairness.

Technological Progress In addition, the Tang and Song periods were a time of exciting advances in technology. Because the Chinese loved learning, they looked for better ways to support scholarly study and spread traditional ideas. They developed methods to manufacture paper in large quantities. Paper was easier to write on than other materials, such as silk cloth.

The Chinese also invented wood-block printing. Printers carved wooden blocks with enough characters to print entire pages. Later, printers created movable type. The Chinese used paper and printing to make the first printed books. This allowed them to record their knowledge in a permanent form.

Historic Influence Chinese technology shaped history in China and the West in many different ways.

• The technology of paper-making spread to the Arab world in the 700s and later to Europe.

• The Chinese invented gunpowder, which they used for fireworks. Later, gunpowder changed warfare by making deadly new weapons possible.

• The Chinese made the first magnetic compass, which spread to Europe. Compasses helped make the European Age of Exploration possible.
The Chinese influenced daily life by exporting porcelain and tea to the world. Porcelain is a hard white ceramic often called china. People desired porcelain for its beauty. It became one of China’s most valuable exports.

For centuries, the Chinese used tea as a medicine. During the Tang Dynasty, it became a popular drink. Later, traders brought tea from East Asia to Europe.

**Lesson Summary**

- Imperial China was run by a bureaucracy filled with scholar-officials.
- Improvements in agriculture and transportation helped make China one of the most powerful countries in the world.
- Chinese inventions such as the compass, gunpowder, and paper shaped the history of other world regions.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**

Chinese inventions, such as porcelain and paper money, are a part of everyday life in the 21st century.

### Terms & Names

1. Explain the importance of imperial, scholar-official, movable type, bureaucracy, wood-block printing, porcelain.

### Using Your Notes

**Finding Main Ideas** Use your completed cluster diagram to answer the following question:

2. What are two examples of technology developed during the Tang and Song dynasties? (7.3.2)

### Main Ideas

3. Who served as China’s scholar-officials? (7.3.6)
4. How did farming change in Tang and Song China? (7.3.2, Framework)
5. What were the historic influences of tea, printing, paper, gunpowder, and the compass? (7.3.5)

### Critical Thinking

6. **Making Inferences** Why do you think the Song Dynasty tried to make the exams cover more practical subjects? (7.3.2)

7. **Understanding Cause and Effect** How did the use of a new type of rice in China affect China’s relationship with foreign lands? (7.3.2)

### Activity

**Making a Map** Using the map on page 209 as a model, make an outline map of China. Then reread the section “Changes in Agriculture” on page 226. In what river valley did the Chinese create new rice fields? Put that river on your map. (7.3.2)