I. The Tang Empires, 618-755

A. Tang Origins

1. The Tang Empire was established in 618. The Tang state carried out a program of territorial expansion, avoided overcentralization, and combined Turkic influence with Chinese Confucian traditions.

B. Buddhism and the Tang Empire

1. The Tang emperors legitimized their control by using the Buddhist idea that kings are spiritual agents who bring their subjects into a Buddhist realm. Buddhist monasteries were important allies of the early Tang emperors; in return for their assistance, they received tax exemptions, land, and gifts.

2. Mahayana Buddhism was the most important school of Buddhism in Central Asia and East Asia. Mahayana beliefs were flexible, encouraged the adaptation of local deities into a Mahayana pantheon, and encouraged the translation of Buddhist texts into local languages.

3. Buddhism spread through Central and East Asia, following the trade routes that converged on the Tang capital, Chang’an. These trade routes also brought other peoples and cultural influences to Chang’an, making it cosmopolitan city.

C. To Chang’an by Land and Sea

1. Chang’an was the destination of ambassadors from other states who were sent to China under the tributary system. The city of Chang’an itself had over a million residents, most of them living outside the city walls.
2. Foreigners in Chang’an lived in special compounds; urban residents lived in walled, gated residential quarters. Roads and canals, including the Grand Canal, brought people and goods to the city. With Chinese control over South China firmly established, Islamic and Jewish merchants from Western Asia came to China via the Indian Ocean trade routes.

3. Large Chinese commercial ships plied the sea routes to Southeast Asia, carrying large amounts of goods. Bubonic plague also brought from West Asia to China along the sea routes.

D. Trade and Cultural Exchange

1. Tang China combined Central Asian influences transmitted mostly by Turkic peoples, with Chinese culture, bringing polo, grape wine, tea, and spices. In trade, China lost its monopoly on silk but began to produce its own cotton, tea, and sugar.

2. Tang roads, river transport, and canals facilitated a tremendous growth in trade. Tang China exported far more than it imported, with high-quality silks and porcelain being among its most desired products.

II. Rivals for Power in Inner Asia and China, 600-907

A. The Uighur and Tibetan Empires

1. In the mid 8th century, a Turkic group, the Uighurs, built an empire in Central Asia. The Uighurs were known as merchants and scribes, had strong ties to both Islam and China, and developed their own script. The Uighur Empire lasted for about 50 years.
2. Tibet was a large empire with access to Southeast Asia, China, and South and Central Asia. Tibet was thus open to Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and even (via Iran) Greek culture.

3. In the early Tang, relations between China and Tibet were friendly. The Tibetan king received a Chinese princess, and Mahayana Buddhism was brought to Tibet and combined with the local religion. But by the late 600s, friendly relations had given way to military rivalry in which Tibet allied with the southwestern kingdom of Nanchao against the Tang.

4. In the 9th century, a Tibetan king attempted to eliminate Buddhism but failed. Tibet then entered a long period of monastic rule and isolation.

B. Upheavals and Repression, 750-879

1. In the late 9th century, the Tang Empire broke the power of the Buddhist monasteries and Confucian ideology was reasserted. The reason for the crackdown was that Buddhism was seen as undermining the family system and eroding the tax base by accumulating tax-free land and attracting hundreds of thousands of people to become monks and nuns.

2. Buddhism also had been used to legitimize women’s participation in politics. The most significant example of this is the career of Wu Zhao, who took control of the government and made herself emperor with the ideological and material support of Buddhism.

3. When Buddhism was repressed, Confucian scholars concocted accounts that painted highly critical portraits of Wu Zhao and other influential women in
Chinese history. The crackdown on Buddhism also brought the destruction of many Buddhist cultural artifacts.

C. The End of the Tang Empire, 879-907

1. As its territory expanded and it faced internal rebellion, the Tang dynasty relied on powerful provincial military governors to maintain peace. In 907, the Tang state ended, and regional military governors established their own kingdoms.

2. None of these smaller kingdoms was able to integrate territory on the scale of the Tang. As a result, East Asia was cut off from communication with the Islamic world and Europe.

III. The Emergence of East Asia, to 1200

A. The Liao and Jin Challenge

1. After the fall of the Tang, a number of new states emerged in the former Tang territory: the Liao, the Jin, and the Chinese Song. As the Liao and Jin cut the Chinese off from Central Asia, the Song developed seafaring and strengthened contacts with Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

2. The Liao state included nomads and settled agriculturalists. The Liao kings presented themselves to their various subject as Confucian rulers, Buddhist monarchs, and nomadic leaders. The Liao rulers were of the Kitan ethnic group.

3. The Liao Empire lasted from 916-1121. The Liao had a strong military and forced the Song to give them annual payments of cash and silk in return for peace.
4. To rid themselves of the Liao, the Song helped the Jurchens of northeast Asia to defeat the Liao. The Jurchens established their own Jin Empire, turned on the Song, and drove them out of north and central China in 1127. The Song continued to reign in south China as the Southern Song Empire (1127-1279)

B. Song Industries

1. During the Song period, the Chinese made a number of technological innovations, many of them based on information that had been brought to China from West Asia during the cosmopolitan Tang era. Many of these innovations had to do with mathematics, astronomy, and calendar making.

2. In 1088, the engineer Su Song constructed a huge, chain-driven mechanical clock that told the time and the day of the month, and indicated the movements of the moon and certain stars and planets. Song inventors also improved the previously invented compass, making it suitable for seafaring.

3. In shipbuilding, the Song introduce the sternpost rudder and watertight bulkheads. These innovations were later adopted in the Persian Gulf.

4. The Song also had a standing, professionally trained, regularly paid military. Iron and coal were important strategic resources for the Song military. The Song produced large amounts of high-grade iron and steel for weapons, armor, and defensive works. The Song also developed and used gunpowder in weapons in their wars.

C. Economy and Society in Song China
1. Song society was dominated by civilian officials and put higher value on civil pursuits that on military affairs. Song thinkers developed a sophisticated Neo-Confucian philosophy, while certain Buddhist sects, particularly Chan (Zen) continued to be popular.

2. The civil service examination system, introduced in the Tang, reached its mature form in the Song. The examination broke the domination of the hereditary aristocracy by allowing men to be chosen for government service on the basis of merit. However, men from poor families were unlikely to be able to devote the necessary time and resources to studying for the rigorous examinations.

3. With the invention of movable type, the Song government was able to mass-produce authorized preparation texts for examination-takers. Printing also contributed to the dissemination of new agricultural technology and thus helped to increase agricultural production and spur population growth in South China.

4. During the Song period, China’s population rose to 100 million. Population growth and economic growth fed the rise of large, crowded, but very well-managed cities like Hangzhou.

5. The Song period saw the wide use of an interregional credit system called flying money and the introduction of government-issued paper money. The paper money caused inflation and was later withdrawn.

6. The Song government was not able to control the market economy as closely as previous government had done. Certain government functions, including tax
collection, were privatized, and a new merchant elite thrived in the cities, their wealth derived from trade rather than land.

7. Women’s status declined during the Song period. Women were entirely subordinated to men and lost their rights to own and manage property; remarriage was forbidden. Painfully bound feet became a mandatory status symbol for elite women. Working-class women and women from non-Han peoples of southern China did not bind their feet and had more independence than elite Han Chinese women did.

IV. New Kingdom in East Asia

A. Korea

1. The Korean hereditary elite absorbed Confucianism and Buddhism from China and passed them along to Japan. The several small Korean kingdoms were united first by Silla in 668, and then by Koryo in the early 900s. Korea used woodblock printing as early as the 700s, and later invented moveable type, which it passed on to Song China.

B. Japan

1. Japan’s mountainous terrain was home to hundreds of small states that were unified, perhaps by horse-riding warriors from Korea, in the 4th or 5th century. The unified state established its government at Yamato on Honshu Island.

2. In the mid 7th century, the rulers of Japan implemented a series of political reforms to establish a centralized government, legal code, national histories, architecture, and city planning based on the model of Tang China. However, the Japanese did not copy the Chinese model uncritically: they adapted it to the
needs of Japan and maintained their own concept of emperorship. The native religion of Shinto survived alongside the imported Buddhist religion.

3. Women of the aristocracy became royal consorts, thus linking the court with their own kinsmen. A constitution that influenced Japanese political thought for centuries was developed in 604 when Siuko, a woman from an immigrant aristocrat family, reigned as empress, taking over for her husband at his death in 592.

4. During the Heian period (794-1185), the Fujiwara clan dominated the Japanese government. The Heian period is known for the aesthetic refinement of its aristocracy and for the elevation of civil officials above warriors.

5. By the late 1000s, some warrior clans had become wealthy and powerful. After years of fighting, one warrior clan took control of Japan and established the Kamakura Shogunate, with its capital at Kamakura in eastern Honshu.

C. Vietnam

1. Geographical proximity and a similar, irrigated wet-rice agriculture made Vietnam suitable for integration with southern China. Economic and cultural assimilation took place during Tang and Song times, when the elite of Annam (northern Vietnam) modeled their high culture on that of the Chinese. When the Tang Empire fell, Annam established itself as an independent state under the name Dai Viet.

2. In southern Vietnam, the kingdom of Champa was influenced by Malay and Indian as well as by Chinese culture. During the Song period, when Dai Viet
was established, Champa cultivated a relationship with the Song state and exported the fast-maturing Champa rice to China.

3. East Asian countries shared a common Confucian interest in hierarchy, but the status of women varied from country to country. Foot-binding was not common outside China. Before Confucianism was introduced to Annam, women there had a higher status than women in Confucian China. Nowhere, however, was the education of women considered valuable or even desirable.