

Later Chinese Dynasties

Lesson 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Period of Disunion was a time of war and disorder that followed the end of the Han dynasty.
2. China was reunified under the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties.
3. The Age of Buddhism saw major religious changes in China.

Key Terms and People

Period of Disunion era following the fall of the Han dynasty during which China was split into several competing kingdoms

Grand Canal waterway begun by the Sui dynasty that linked northern and southern China

Empress Wu Tang ruler whose methods were sometimes vicious, but whose reign was stable and prosperous

Lesson Summary

THE PERIOD OF DISUNION

After the Han dynasty collapsed in 220, China was split into several competing kingdoms, each ruled by military leaders. This time is called the **Period of Disunion**. The era lasted for more than 350 years, from 220 to 589. During this period, nomadic tribes settled in northern China, and many northern Chinese moved south. These movements resulted in blended cultures in both north and south China.

What was the Period of Disunion?

THE SUI, TANG, AND SONG

China then reunified. Under the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties, China remained a unified nation for almost 700 years.

The Sui (SWAY) dynasty was established by a northern leader called Yang Jian (YANG jee-en). In 589, he led his army to conquer the south and reunified China. The Sui began the **Grand Canal** to link northern and southern China. In 618, the Tang dynasty replaced the Sui. The Tang ruled China for nearly 300 years. During this period,

Who was the first Sui ruler?

How many years did the Sui dynasty last?

Lesson 1, *continued*

Chinese power and influence reached most of eastern Asia, as well as much of Central Asia.

Historians view the Tang dynasty as a golden age of Chinese civilization. One Tang leader named Taizong (TY-tzoong) conquered most of Central Asia, reformed the military, and created law codes. In the reign of Xuanzong (SHOO-an-tzoong), culture flourished and many of China's finest poets wrote. **Empress Wu**, the only woman to rule China, ruled with an iron fist, but she kept China stable and prosperous.

After the Tang dynasty fell, China became divided again and entered a period known as Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. This lasted 53 years. Then, in 960, China was again unified under the Song dynasty, and another great period of accomplishment began that lasted for about 300 years, until 1279.

THE AGE OF BUDDHISM

During the troubled Period of Disunion, many Chinese people turned to Buddhism. They took comfort in the Buddhist teaching that people can escape suffering and achieve a state of peace. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, Buddhism became well established throughout China and Buddhist temples arose across the land.

Buddhism influenced many aspects of Chinese culture, including art, literature, and architecture. Chinese Buddhist missionaries brought the religion to Japan, Korea, and other Asian lands. Despite a Tang emperor's campaign against the religion, Buddhism remained a vital part of Chinese culture.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Sequence Research the development of Buddhism in China during the Period of Disunion. Create an illustrated and annotated timeline showing key events and people in the religion's history.

Circle the names of three important Tang rulers.

Why did many people convert to Buddhism during the Period of Disunion?

Lesson 1, *continued*

DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

1. The _____ was a time when China was split into several competing kingdoms that were ruled by military leaders.
(Age of Buddhism/Period of Disunion)
2. The only woman to rule China, _____ was a ruthless ruler, but under her reign China was stable and prosperous.
(Empress Wu/Yang Jian)
3. Yang Jian established the _____, during which the _____ began to link China and the Period of Disunion ended. **(Sui dynasty/missionaries) (Grand Canal/Age of Buddhism)**
4. After the Tang dynasty fell, China was divided into separate kingdoms competing for power in a period known as the _____. **(Age of Buddhism/Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms)**
5. The period from 400 to 845 can be called the _____ because of the influence Buddhism had on Chinese culture. **(Age of Buddhism/Period of Disunion)**
6. In 960 China was reunified under the _____, which, like the Tang dynasty, was a period of great accomplishments.
(Song dynasty/Period of Disunion)
7. During the _____, Chinese power and influence reached much of eastern Asia, as well as large parts of Central Asia. **(Tang dynasty/Period of Disunion)**