

Periodizations of Chinese History

Models	Timeline														
	2000 BCE		500		0 CE		500		1000		1500				
Traditional Dynastic Model	Xia (ca. 2100–1600)	Shang (ca. 1600–1050)	Zhou (ca. 1046–256)	Qin (221–206)	Han (206–220)	Six Dynasties (220–589)	Sui (581–618)	Tan (618–906)	Five Dynasties (907–960)	Song (960–1279)	Yuan (1279–1368)	Ming (1368–1644)	Qing (1644–1912)	ROC (1912–1949) PRC (1949–Pres.)	
Jacques Gernet: Transformations in Chinese Political Forms		Palace Civilization (ca. 1600–900)	System of Aristocratic Cities (900–500)	Development of Monarchical Institutions (500–220)	Conquest of Former Kingdoms (220 BCE–190 CE)	Military Warlords (190–310)	Military Aristocracy (310–590)	Sino-Barbarian Aristocracy (590–755)	Military Adventurers/Division (755–960)	Reunification (970–1280)	Non-Chinese Empire (1280–1370)	Autocracy (1370–1520)	Political Crisis/Prosperity and Peace (1520–1800)	Collapse, and Loss of National Independence (1800–1900)	Military Dictatorship and Peasant Militias, est. of PRC (1900–1950)
Mark Elvin: Social and Economic Developments	Early Origins in the Yellow River Valley		Permanent Agriculture (800s–onward)			State Administration of Land Holdings (200s)		Expansion of Yangtze River Valley (600s)	Revolution in Farming, Water Transport, and Money and Credit (700s–1350)			Failure to Maintain Economic Advantage (1350s–onward)		Economic Subjugation by the West (1800s–onward)	
Marxist Interpretation of Chinese History	Slave Society (Xia–Shang)		Decentralized Feudal Society (Zhou to Sui)					Bureaucratic Feudalism (Tang to Opium War)					Capitalist Society (1800s)	Socialist Society (1949–?)	
Naitl Torajiro-Kyoto Hypothesis	Ancient (Prehistoric Times to Middle of Eastern Han)				Medieval Period (chusei)				Early Modern/Modern (kinsei)						

Chart and questions developed by Angela A. Lee

Discussion Questions:

- What are the problems with the traditional dynastic approach?
 - Suggests changes in Chinese life when change not evident (only political)
 - Suggests degree of continuity that is not always there (other side of coin)
 - Stresses history of political elite
- Overlooks economic and agricultural life (which affected a much higher percent of population throughout Chinese history)
- Does Gernet's model have the same issues? What else does it offer?
- Does Elvin's model have the same issues? What else does it offer?
- Does the Marxist model have the same issues? What else does it offer?

Synthesis Questions:

- Should each Chinese dynasty be seen as a “separate” empire? Or should Chinese dynasties be considered ONE continuous empire?
- Compare the traditional dynastic model with Mark Elvin, who asks the question “why did the Chinese Empire stay together when the Roman Empire, and every other empire of antiquity or the middle ages, ultimately collapse?”
- How do these different models help deepen our understanding of Chinese history?
- Can these different types of models be applied to other empires in world history?

Sources

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