

TEXAS UIL

SOCIAL STUDIES

NOTES



SUPPLEMENT - EAST ASIA

Based on the 2019-20 High School
UIL SOCIAL STUDIES topic

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Advanced Social Studies Notes 2019-2020

East Asia:

The Middle Kingdom, the Rising Sun, the Land of the Morning Calm, and Beyond

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Country Profiles

CHINA

Overview

Since China is arguably the oldest civilization in East Asia, one of the oldest in the world, and is undeniably the most populated country today. It is a supremely important country to study for understanding today's world and as addressed, it is indispensable in understanding East Asia.

China's geography gave it insulation in some ways and paths to the rest of the region in others. The Himalayas provide source water to China's key rivers (Huang He and Yangtze), but also provided a southwestern barrier to possible incursions from other groups during ancient times. The Gobi Desert provided the same protection to the north and northwest. With distance and water allowing relative isolation from the rest of the region, China developed rather independently, and its powerful culture would prove so effective and enticing that it would help develop the other fledgling cultures that would slowly emerge along the periphery of the region.

Despite China's large size just over 10% of its land is arable. Its early people found success near the Huang He due to its large floodplain that provided rich farming opportunities. The flood-prone river is also referred to as China's Sorrow due to its destructive capacity. It is from this give and take situation that one of China's founding myths was derived. Yu the Great is said to have been able to finally harness the floods and create stability that led to the founding of the mostly mythical Xia dynasty around 2000 BCE. The Shang dynasty around Anyang is the first dynasty firmly established in historical record through oracle bones and later reliable sources. The Zhou followed as the longest dynasty on record, but the extremely short-lived Qin and its founder Qin Shi Huang provided not only the origin of the country's popular name, but the origins of the great unified dynasties and Chinese power to follow for over 2000 years. Liu Bang and the Han perfected and further solidified what had been established by the Qin and the economic and political strength of this period allowed for the inimitable Silk Road to begin a previously unrivaled and world-changing exchange of European and Asian goods and ideas.

Amongst the ideas flowing out of the Han people and helping to lead to a "golden age" during the Tang Dynasty were Confucianism, Legalism, and Daoism. Ironically, these philosophies and standards for society and government action that helped form much of the Chinese culture's organization were born out of one of the most turbulent eras in the country's long history. China often saw eras of profound growth and achievement followed by disorder due to rival factions violently seeking to assert control. Out of the Warring State and Spring and Autumn chaos came the Hundred Schools of Thought that were formulated, debated, and articulated over the course of a few centuries before coalescing into three well-known prevailing philosophies. These ideas would go in and out of favor with the ruling classes but would have a lasting impact on the overall culture of China and all of East Asia for the next two millennia.

Despite reaching amazing levels of sophistication with the advent of gunpowder, the compass, paper, and printing, the Chinese did not continue to advance technologically as one might expect. The reasons for this are still debated and of course are multifaceted. Part of the reason may lie in the fact that China was so economically successful there was little need to seek advancement. Another may be that regional hegemony and an ascendance of Confucian thought put little emphasis on expansion. Trade was tied closely to the tribute system and was not seen as economically important as it was for Western nations. This becomes even more obvious when one compares the desire for Chinese goods in Europe versus the meager market for European goods in China. The Silk Road and other trade and tribute relations with surrounding kingdoms led to a luxurious lifestyle for the Chinese court when civil

war and disturbances were not interfering. Civil strife was relatively limited due to the economic success. Much of the upheaval that existed after the Song dynasty was due to outside influences. The Mongol-based Yuan dynasty founded by Kublai Khan was extremely rich and powerful, but many of its changes were abandoned by the Ming since it was a “non-Han” dynasty. Despite the success of Zheng He’s treasure fleet and perhaps due to a legacy of fear caused by the Mongol’s, the Ming severely limited trade in 1434 and halted most maritime initiatives. These events coupled with other trends in the development of the West led to China being on the other end of the political influence scale moving into the seventeenth century and beyond.

Despite the “closed-country” idea, China was still trading with Europe throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties. The special areas of economic activity created for trade became vital to countries such as Portugal and their financial legacy continues to be seen in the unique rules that exist in Macau and Hong Kong today. The popularity of unique Chinese products such as silk, tea, and porcelain led to more and more aggressive efforts by Western countries to increase the allowances for trade. With the largest portion of the world’s silver flowing into China, but very little coming out the UK and others sought to flex their military might in an effort to create a trade system that was more advantageous for themselves. The rapid increase of Western naval power that coincided with the stagnation of Chinese naval development created the perfect military leverage needed to pry open economic opportunities. The Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion exemplified the realities of the modern era for China. It was no longer even the regional power it had once been with its influence over Korea rapidly waning and Japan becoming the unquestioned military power by the close of the nineteenth century.

The Qing dynasty’s hold on power was rapidly disintegrating at the opening of the twentieth century and regional warlords replaced them as the last emperor of China abdicated in 1912. In the resulting vacuum a battle between Nationalist (Kuomintang) supporters behind Sat Yun-Sen and then more vigorously Chang Ki-Shek and the emerging Communist forces led by Mao Ze Dong developed. The exploitation of China started by Europeans was taken over by the Empire of Japan beginning in Manchuria and eventually evolving into an all-out attempt at domination in the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II. This struggle for survival briefly tabled the domestic civil war, but as WWII closed the second chapter in the battle between the Nationalists and Communists opened with renewed vigor. By 1949, Mao emerged victorious and created the most populous and eventually most successful Communist nation in the world. Chiang fled to Taiwan and remained in power there creating a rift between the island and the mainland that continues today.

The economic powerhouse that exists today had some significant stumbles as it sought to create the unique system it now has. The Great Leap Forward attempted to create a rapid industrialization but led to major famines and suffering amongst the rural areas. In an effort to consolidate diminishing power Mao used the uncompromising Cultural Revolution to increase zeal for the unique Communist system. The death of Mao and Deng Xiaping’s leadership opened the path to modernization and an increasing mixed-market economy. Though political repression lessened significantly events like Tiananmen Square and current censorship continue to show the current regime has little to no appetite for dissent despite its continued economic experimentation and expansion. With an opening of the economy, China quickly benefited, and its economy quickly surpassed most of the traditional powerhouses in the West eventually becoming second only to the U.S. in GDP and has continued to close the gap behind the lead as its growth continues. It is interesting to see how China has come full circle and is again an economic, political, and technological leader in the world.

Current Issues

Population growth: China's population represents almost ⅓ of the total population on earth with nearly 1.5 billion people. The infamous one-child policy was reversed after nearly 40 years and replaced with the current two-child policy. Due to continued slow population growth that may be abandoned soon. In a complete reversal from past generations, the workforce continues to decline as workers age and China may face a shortage in the coming decades.

Internet Censorship: "The Great Firewall of China" is the world's premiere system for detecting and censoring material the government deems inappropriate and subversive. Search engines such as Google that could point users to undesirable materials are completely banned. The ban extends to many social network sites including Twitter. Even sites or apps deemed appropriate are heavily monitored and censored with images from the iconic "Tank Man" of Tiananmen Square to Winnie the Pooh being blocked due to their association with anti-government ideas. China has even been accused of blocking or limiting legitimate commercial sites in order to provide domestic companies a competitive advantage.

Intellectual Piracy: The US Trade Representative estimates that piracy and theft of intellectual property in China costs the U.S. approximately \$600 billion a year. Traditionally, this has come from a lack of effort by the government to enforce copyright law. This leads to the piracy of books, music, movies, and other entertainment products. However, there has been a growing concern with efforts originating from China to steal technical data from U.S. firms and companies. These trade secrets can then be used to help Chinese companies and even government agencies develop new products.

Trade/Tariff Policy: China is the largest trade partner with the U.S. and with the second largest economy in the world it holds the same position with most other industrialized nations. Trade between China and its partners is often unbalanced with exports coming from China significantly outpacing its imports. The U.S. has recently tried to use tariffs as leverage to balancing trade issuing 25% taxes on \$250 billion worth of products and threatening more. China has responded with similar tariffs that have caused trade to fall off on both sides and seen both economies begin to stall.

Investment in Africa and developing nations: For most of the past decade the Chinese government has made significant investments in projects and development in African nations. China announced \$60 billion in investments just in 2018. Most observers believe this strategy provides multiple benefits for the communist regime. Africa is a rich source of raw materials and investments have largely focused on mining and drilling. Securing a large base of rare natural resources gives China's a stable source of materials to feed its various industries. The investment is also seen as creating strong political relationships that can be leveraged against political, military, and economic rivals around the globe. Corruption amongst party leadership:

Support for North Korea: China has been the strongest ally of the DPRK since its creation at the close of World War II. Though China remains North Korea's largest trade partner and supplier of food and energy aid the relationship has been strained. China was the biggest obstacle in the United Nations to imposing sanctions on the Kim regime due to its illicit nuclear activities. However, after 2006 China began supporting more actions against North Korea and the resulting sanctions have caused trade between the two to drop significantly. Despite recent strain and official condemnation from Beijing over missile tests and the DPRK nuclear program, the two have increased physical connections. Rail and shipping routes between the nations have never been more advanced. China has a vested interest in

KOREA

Overview

Several creation myths exist in ancient Korean history, but few survived the incursion and expansion of Buddhism and Confucianism into the country. These shamanistic origins vary depending on the area of the peninsula, but one legend has persevered to be the most prominent. Tangun (aka Dangun Wanggeom) is said to have been the founder of the first Korean kingdom (Gojoseon or Old Choson). The Lord of Heaven mated with a bear that passed a test to become a human female and Tangun was the resulting offspring. Today he is celebrated by both the North and South as laying the foundation for their modern states over 4,000 years ago. Even though Tangun is associated with a kingdom that was limited to the north end of the peninsula and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has worked hard to tie the current Kim dynasty's origins with Tangun's near Mount T'aebaek the story speaks to the Korean people's shared experience. It is easy for modern observers to think of a North (DPRK) and a South (Republic of Korea) as completely distinct and separate cultures. However, when 70 years is weighed against nearly 4,000 it quickly becomes less consequential and should steer students back to thinking of Korea as a singular people with competing political and social practices like one would find in varying regions of many modern nations though granted with more stark contrasts.

Korean history quickly intertwines itself with Chinese and Japanese kingdoms. How and to what extent these cultures overlapped and influenced the peninsula is still a source of debate and Korea has often fought for an independent identity regarding its development. Certainly, its neighbors had a large impact on it, but both China and Japan have at different times tried to claim responsibility for fostering the creation of Korean culture. These assertions are hotly contested by Koreans and are not well supported by the archeological record. The Old Choson Kingdom set Korean culture on a firm path and saw the beginnings of many artistic, scientific, and political traditions that would come to be iconic. By 300 BCE this former powerhouse had broken into multiple rival kingdoms and the peninsula would not have another dominant power for another three centuries. The smaller rival kingdoms would finally coalesce into three major powers and usher in the Three Kingdoms Period that lasted for over 600 years. Koguryo (aka Goguryeo or Guryeo/Koryo) was the first of these powers to emerge and was also the largest in its territory. It's name would eventually be worked into the favored English title for the area, "Korea." Along with Baekje (aka Paekche) and Silla, (and a lesser extent the southern confederation of Gaya) Koguryo would alternate alliances between themselves and China to control most of Korea until the 7th Century. The Samguk sagi is a considerable source of information about this era, but it was written in the 12th century and so its accuracy is not considered complete. Eventually, Silla was able to subjugate Baekje giving it better access to China. This strengthened alliance eventually bore fruit under the Tang dynasty. Silla supported Tang efforts to conquer the rival kingdoms and then asserted itself as the unified ruler of the peninsula starting in 668.

The unification of the peninsula under a single political authority led to a rapid spread of shared ideas. Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism would gain favor in various forms and their influence continues to modern times. The bone rank system of stratifying society incorporated