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HISTORY OF CHINA: C. 1840-1978

B.H.I.E.- 141

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Content

HISTORY OF CHINA: C. 1840-1978

Question Paper—June-2024 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—December-2023 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—June-2023 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—December-2022 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—Exam Held in July-2022 (Solved)	1
Sample Question Paper–1 (Solved)	1
Sample Question Paper–2 (Solved)	1

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
1.	China: A Historical Perspective	1
2.	The Opium Wars in China	15
3.	The Unequal Treaty System in China	24
4.	Taiping Uprising	33
5.	Boxer Rebellion	44
6.	Self Strengthening Movement and Hundred Days Reforms	52
7.	The Chinese Revolution of 1911	62
8.	The Failure of 1911 and the Emergence of the Guomindang 1911-12	73
9.	The New Cultural Movement After 1911	82
10.	Foreign Investment and Rise of New Class	90

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
11.	Rise of Nationalism	97
12.	Formation of the Communist Party and the Guomindang	105
13.	Struggle for Control: The Communist Party and the Guomindang	112
14.	China and the War with Japan	124
15.	The Chinese Revolution	134
16.	China From Revolution to Reform (1949-1978)	144



**Sample Preview
of the
Solved
Sample Question
Papers**

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

HISTORY OF CHINA: C. 1840-1978

B.H.I.E.-141

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any **five** questions. Atleast **two** questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. What led to the outbreak of the First Opium War ? Write a note on the Chinese response to the west.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 17, 'The First Opium War and the Treaty of Nanking' and 'The Chinese Response to The Western Presence'.

Q. 2. Analyse the reasons for Boxer rebellion. What was its significance?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 50, Q. No. 1.

Q. 3. Briefly discuss the major political developments in China from 1914 to 1919.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 73, 'China and the World War-I' and Page No. 74, 'Japan's Twenty One Demands'.

Q. 4. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Impact of Buddhism on Chinese thought.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'The Evolution of Chinese Thought and The Impact of Buddhism'.

(b) The self-strengthening movement.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 52, 'The Self-Strengthening Movement'.

SECTION-II

Q. 5. Write a note on the emergence of a new culture in China after the Revolution of 1911.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 83, 'The 1911 Revolution and the New Culture'.

Q. 6. Write an essay on the emergence and activities of the Communist Party of China.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 106, 'The Communist Party-1921' and Page No. 107, 'Their Early Ideas' and 'Their Early Activities'.

Q. 7. Write in brief about China's transformation to a socialist system under Mao-Zedong.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 146, 'Socialist Education Movement' and 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'.

Q. 8. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Sun Yatsen.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 69, Q. No. 1 (a).

(b) The Red Bases.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 126, 'The Red Bases: A New Type of Society'.



QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

HISTORY OF CHINA: C. 1840-1978

B.H.I.E.-141

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any **five** questions. Atleast **two** questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. Discuss China's relations with the rest of the world before the nineteenth century.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 4, 'China and The World before The Nineteenth Century'.

Q. 2. Why did the Taiping uprising fail? What was its impact on China?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 35, 'The Downfall of The Taipings' and Page No. 36, 'The Nature and Impact of The Taiping Uprising'.

Q. 3. Write a note on the Chinese Revolution of 1911.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 71, Q. No. 3.

Q. 4. Write short notes on the following:

(a) The Hundred Days Reform.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 60, Q. No. 3.

(b) The May Fourth Movement.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 74, 'The May Fourth Movement'.

SECTION-II

Q. 5. Explain the rise of nationalism in China in the twentieth century.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 100, Q. No. 2.

Q. 6. What led to the formation of the United Front? Discuss the reasons for the break-up between the Guomindang and the Communist Party of China.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 112, 'Formation of The United Front' and Page No. 117, Q. No. 4.

Q. 7. Analyse the economic, political and social framework of the new regime in China after 1949.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 136, 'New Regime : Economic, Political and Social Framework'.

Q. 8. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Yuan Shikai.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 72, 'The Qing Response' and Chapter-8, Page No. 73, 'Warlordism'.

(b) The Great Leap Forward.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 149, Q. No. 2. ■ ■

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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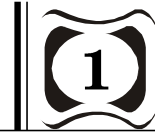


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HISTORY OF CHINA C. 1840-1978

China: A Historical Perspective



INTRODUCTION

China has been one of the oldest civilizations in the world. The unit discusses the history from 1840 to 1978. Being a flourishing civilization, the Chinese economy always attracted traders around the world. While studying the history of China, questions arose regarding the breakup of the Chinese empire into smaller units and the process of reuniting within a short period of 50 years during the 20th century. Despite being repeatedly defeated and humiliated by foreign invasions, China managed to survive and re-emerged as one of the powerful nations of the world. The unit will throw light on the important landmarks in Chinese history along with its relation with the rest of the world. We will also learn about the Qing dynasty.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

CHANGING UNDERSTANDING OF CHINA

The earlier Western narratives of China focussed on the assault on China by the West, which according to them was inevitable or justified. They also made China responsible for not dealing with the West in an adequate manner. They also focussed on the reasons behind the emergence of communism. In addition, by putting forward the notion of “Sino-centrism”, the western scholars argued that by assuming themselves superior to others, the Chinese were unwilling to learn from other countries. The Western-derived narrative of China’s “failure” to meet the challenges of the modern world, and the attempt to find the reasons for this in China’s traditional civilization and institutions, is not accepted now. They emphasized China’s past and its traditions to explain the phenomenal ‘rise of China’ in

recent decades. On the basis of processes such as commercialization of the economy, urbanization, the spread of literacy, technological development, etc., the scholars now marked the beginning of modern China since the beginning of the Qing period in the mid-seventeenth century, or during the ‘Ming-Qing transition’ in the 16th and 17th centuries, while some scholars consider it even as far back as the Song period around the 11th and 12th centuries. It indicates a striking resemblance in the internal processes that were underway in China to those in early modern Europe.

Finally, the notion that China and the Chinese were contemptuous of non-Chinese people, was rejected on the basis that Buddhism, the important religion of China, came from the Indian subcontinent through Central and South East Asia. Also, China was a major partner in a thriving intra-Asian trade and the Chinese goods like silk, porcelain, and tea were popular among various countries and except for certain periods in its history, China’s rulers had facilitated foreign trade.

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF CHINA

The geography of China includes the fertile plains along the Yellow and the Yangzi rivers and many other waterways, a long coastal belt, the thickly forested hills in the south and southwest, the high Tibetan plateau and the Himalayan range in west-southwest, the temperate forested zone bordering Siberia in the north east and a vast and arid desert regions also located in the far west and north-west. Recent excavations confirm the presence of multiple centers of bronze age civilization. The region of Anyang in North China has been identified as the core of the state called Shang. Excavations of the ancient city of Anyang in the early twentieth century revealed tens of thousands of bone

fragments and bronze vessels, many of which had inscriptions in proto-Chinese characters. The archaeological evidence suggests the presence of stratified society and a theocratic state that was able to command great reserves of labour. The evolution of written language is clearly recognizable as the forerunner of the present-day Chinese script. The writing found on oracle bones shows complexity, indicating that this language had existed for a long time. In fact, modern scholars are able to read it because the language is very similar to the modern Chinese writing system.

The Shang rulers were defeated by the founder of the Zhou dynasty during the end of the second millennium BCE. Zhou dynasty was the longest lasting dynasty in Chinese history that remained till the 3rd century BCE. The Zhou is the first dynasty for which literary records are available. Several important classical schools of thought were laid in China during this period. The use of iron resulted in the increase in agricultural productivity as well as in the making of weapons for war. Though the direct rule of Zhou rulers was confined to small territory, the much larger area was governed by members of the royal family and nobles who remained loyal to the Zhou overlord. Around the 8th century BCE, the increasing rivalry among the principalities in the area known as the *Zhongguo* led to the decline of the Zhou period. With the victory of the ruler of the Qin state in the northwestern part of China, a unified empire was established in China. The ruler of Qin proclaimed himself 'the first emperor of the Qin', Qin Shihuangdi, in 221 BCE.

THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE THOUGHT AND THE IMPACT OF BUDDHISM

The increase in wealth and the rise of new technologies under the Zhou rule along with other circumstances resulted in various social and intellectual transformations due to which so-called 'hundred schools of thought' emerged. Various philosophers paid attention towards the rapid changes taking place around them.

Confucius also called the Master Kong, or Kongfuzi was a famous Chinese philosopher, born in 550 BCE, who referred to the breakdown of order as moral decay. He emphasized on respecting family relationships and mutual obligations among people. He

believed that order and prosperity would be restored if truly moral 'men of talent' governed the land. The qualities of men must be judged on the basis of education and merit not on birth. The notion of government by virtue rather than government based on divine right, are distinctive features of Confucian philosophy. The sayings of Confucius were collected after his lifetime by his disciples in the *Analects*. His teachings regarding respecting order and hierarchy, on valuing education over birth, and his teachings on the moral foundations of governance, have formed an intrinsic part of the traditional Chinese ethos.

At a similar time a different philosophy called Daoism was introduced by Lao Zi, and its foundational text is called the *Dao De Jing*. While Confucian emphasis on social order, structure and governance, Daoism held that man needed to live in tune with the natural order of things, or the 'dao' (usually translated as the Way). Daoism was so that a mystical philosophy that emphasized spontaneity and intuition. Generally speaking, Daoist works often spoke in riddles and parables in contrast to the direct, moralistic and didactic tone of the Confucian texts. The co-existence of very different schools of thought, Confucianism and Daoism, led the complexity to the Chinese spiritual world. Although Confucianism remained dominant, it never displaced the importance of Daoism, which became deeply rooted in Chinese poetry, painting, and the inner world of the Chinese, both the common people and the scholars.

But both the Confucian and Daoist philosophies were not concerned about God or life after death, which was introduced by Buddhism. It entered the Chinese belief system mainly from around the 3rd century CE. In a period of social and political unrest, Buddhism might show the way for the possibility for leading a righteous life when conditions around them were so chaotic. Mahayana Buddhism was dominant in China. Its colorful rituals and fables of Buddha and bodhisattvas provide a new dimension to Chinese spiritual life. The various welfare measures carried out by Buddhist sangha also helped in spreading its popularity. The absorption of Buddhism into China contradicts the argument that China was a closed society and did not allow other cultures. Thus, the Chinese belief system was a complete amalgam of different and contrasting philosophies and practices.

THE CHINESE IMPERIAL STATE AND THE CHALLENGE FROM THE STEPPE

The establishment of a centrally administered empire by Qin Shihuangdi in 221 BCE was a major landmark in Chinese history. The first Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi, divided the empire for the first time into centrally administered provinces. Enforcement of uniform legal code, unified script and standardization of weights, measures and coinage system were some remarkable achievements of Qin Shihuangdi. By converting the peasants into freeholders, he collected all the taxes directly. He constructed trunk roads that connected the different parts of the empire. He laid the foundation of the Great Wall of China.

The basic frame of the Chinese empire, which lasted until the 20th century, was built in less than a couple of decades, before Qin Shihuangdi died. Due to harsh methods, combined with the huge tax levies the rebellion erupted after Shihuangdi's death. The leader of this rebellion found the Han dynasty that lasted four centuries. The Chinese empire was modified at different times by including other territories on the periphery, which were governed with less direct intervention from the Center. The ideology of the state was inspired from Confucian notions of 'rule by virtue' rather than the first emperor's emphasis on strict laws and harsh punishments. The bureaucracy was another significant feature. The bureaucrats entered the service mainly through rigorous competitive examinations, rather than through inheritance or recommendation. It resulted in greater stability in the Chinese empire. Though different dynasties came to power in China and China had gone through repeated civil strife and foreign invasions, in the last seven and a half centuries of imperial rule, the unified empire remained intact.

Due to the developed agricultural economy, the riches of China drew the attention of nomadic people on its northern and north-western frontiers. These exhibit their military superiority to the Chinese state, particularly in those periods when the state was weak. China experienced many invasions from the Steppe during the period following the collapse of the Han empire in the 3rd century CE. The Mongols under the leadership of Kubilai Khan, during the 13th century managed to establish the rule of ethnically non-Chinese (or non-Han) people over the whole of the Chinese empire for the first time. Four centuries later, the Mongol dynasty was invaded by Manchus from the

region north-east of the Great Wall and rule of the Qing dynasty (the last dynasty to rule over the Chinese empire) began. Most importantly, the rule of these non-Han dynasties over the Chinese empire did not result in the break-up of the empire, rather the empire was relatively strong and stable under the Mongol (Yuan) and Manchu (Qing) dynasties.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

During the 19th century, China underwent major socio-economic and cultural changes that were different from that unified by the Qin emperor.

From aristocracy to gentry: The powerful aristocratic families were destroyed by the first Qin emperor in order to consolidate his rule. He also established a direct relationship between the state and peasant taxpayers. During the Han dynasty, aristocratic elites once again revived but were badly hit by the bloody wars in the end of the Tang dynasty and in the subsequent period of civil war. But the significant reason for the real demise of the aristocracy lies in the expansion of recruitment through the competitive civil service examinations, which became the medium of entering officialdom. This stratum came to be known as the gentry.

Ethnic and cultural diversity: The entrance of Buddhism, a foreign religion, into Chinese society and culture and the nomadic invasion led to the development of a mixed and complex society. Due to the increasing trade and social connections, including inter-marriage, between Chinese and non-Chinese resulted in a more diverse society and culture in China including combined indigenous and foreign customs and traditions. It marked the beginning of a cultural north-south divide in China due to foreign influence in the north.

Growing commercialization of the economy: The Song period in China (960-1279 CE) witnessed remarkable economic growth and the development of inter-regional commerce. Initially, the peasants produce for their own subsistence but then the pattern changed for paying rent to the landlords and subsequently, the peasants began to produce for the market. The chaotic conditions in the north forced the people to migrate to more fertile central and southern regions of China. The abundance of water and the favourable climate resulted in great increase in agricultural productivity including new varieties of rice and other commercial crops like cotton or tea. The growth in inter-regional commerce increased the value of money and thus, new forms of

currency, including the world's earliest paper currency emerged. Economic growth resulted in the expansion of market towns, urban centers, and the great commercial cities like Kaifeng and Suzhou. Urban life gave rise to distinctively new and popular forms of culture as well. However, this growth also led to the marginalization of the poorer sections of the peasantry.

Population growth: There was a tremendous increase in population in the last few centuries of imperial China. Under the Qing dynasty, the population was about 500 million. This tremendous increase in population increased pressure on the land. Also, the system of parceling out land equally among sons led to reduction in family's landholdings over time. Thus, many peasants abandoned their lands and these were then acquired by landlords and they either turned to tenant farming or they chose non-agricultural occupations. Many peasants also joined the secret societies and rebel movements which offered them some form of protection and hope.

THE QING DYNASTY

Though the Qing dynasty was responsible for the humiliation of China at the hands of the West, and for the collapse of the imperial order, under the same dynasty, China had reached a height in terms of size, power and prosperity.

The Qing dynasty was founded by non-Han people who came from Manchuria, located in the north-east of the Great Wall. The Qing dynasty overthrew the last 'pure' Chinese dynasty, the Ming, in 1644. Manchu rulers adopted a variety of methods to incorporate vast territories into the Chinese empire. They also conquered parts of Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan (renamed Xinjiang), Tibet and parts of the deep south-west. Their rule was virtually unchallenged by the later 18th century. The three Qing emperors ruled over the throne in an efficient manner. Under the strong and hardworking rulership, the whole administration was working effectively. But the administrative support system did not grow as per the need of the rapidly growing population and economy. It led to growing administrative inefficiency, corruption and demoralization. Another problem was that in the absence of any major challenge, the Qing became more concerned in preventing the military establishment from becoming a threat to their own rule. This seriously affected the fighting ability of the military. Fiscal problems regarding the shortage of silver, and the

spread of the opium-smoking habit among civil and military personnel, were other problems that negatively impacted the Qing administration in the early 19th century.

Thus, it is incorrect that the Qing government and elite had become incapable of responding to major challenges and taking major initiatives in the last century of their rule.

CHINA AND THE WORLD BEFORE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Sinocentrism: Zhongguo and Tianxia: The term "Zhongguo" was first used to refer to the 'central states' in China during the Zhou period. However, Zhongguo is also called 'middle kingdom', and many western scholars used it to argue that the Chinese consider themselves as the center of the world and that they looked down on everyone else. We found that the Chinese at different times have been keenly aware of the existence of other countries and their military strength or culture. Chinese Buddhist rulers also believed that India, the original home of Buddhism, was the central realm while China was just a 'borderland'. Another concept i.e. tianxia or 'all under Heaven' is also used to reinforce the notion of sinocentrism. It was a way of referring to those areas which were contiguous to the centrally administered Chinese empire but which were not directly ruled by the emperor i.e. other parts of East Asia, Central Asia and parts of Southeast Asia. Thus, it is not true that most of the foreign policies of China were dependent on sinocentrism.

The tribute system: The term 'tribute system' was used by John King Fairbank and American sinology, in order to depict the overarching framework regarding China's external relations during the pre-19th century. According to this concept, China maintained relations only with those states and people which presented tribute to the Chinese emperor and thereby accepted the superiority of the Chinese emperor. In return, the Chinese emperor would send back valuable gifts allowing the visitors to trade. It represents Chinese exceptionalism, which mainly deal with its own prestige and thus the foreign relations were not conducted on the basis of self-interest and profit.

Now, this theory is rejected by many scholars as it did not justify the vast range of policies and institutions employed by Chinese rulers and didn't apply a 'one standard fits all' rule. It was seen that most of Western