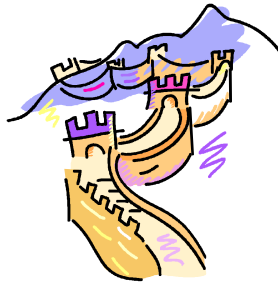


Imperial China



Imperial China (221 BC onward) represents a loss of power of the landed aristocrats, and the development of the power of the Emperor, allied with the peasants.

Emperor

- Levied taxes (instead of aristocrats)
- Brought new lands into cultivation, sending out huge numbers of peasant colonists
- Sent aristocrats to capital or new cities
- Title to lands (new and old) given to peasants
- Acquired huge estates: from 100 BC to 100 AD, the annual imperial income was 8 billion *chien*; the rest of China's was 10 billion
- Used huge numbers of peasants, soldiers, and criminals on public works projects

Peasants

- Would get loans and farming tools
- Worked on irrigation projects
- Tendency was to get private ownership of land (as opposed to simply paying taxes to an aristocratic landlord), and to pay taxes directly to the emperor instead
- Tended to support the emperor, except if taxes were too high

Hostile tribes along the northern borders were always a problem for China.

- This is one reason why the emperors tried so hard to bring new lands into cultivation—it set up colonies and support for the Chinese army.
- Huge numbers of gifts were given to the border tribes: gifts of silk to them grew from 7 tons in 50 BC, to 30 tons in 1 BC. In 91 AD, out of this average of 18 billion *chien* produced by China, some 3 to 4 billion worth of goods were handed over to the nomads along the north, and the desert tribes in the northwest.

Introduction of the iron plow allowed farmers to sow seeds deeper into the ground; the use of a moldboard helped turn over and aerate the soil—both techniques made the soil more fertile.