Name: _____ Date: _____

Study Guide #19 Imperial China

The Qin Dynasty. By 221 B.C. the Qin dynasty had defeated other Chinese kingdoms and unified China under their rule. Shi Huangdi, the first Qin emperor, ruled a larger area than any preceding dynasty. Applying Legalist ideas, he created a strong central government, bringing the nobles under control by forcing them to move to the capital. He separated the country into military districts controlled by governors, created a uniform system of law, and installed a tax collection system.

Shi Huangdi also expanded the Qin Empire and built a long defensive wall to keep out invaders, which later became known as the Great Wall of China. He also maintained an **autocracy**, in which the emperor held total power. To keep a tight hold on society, he burned books and executed scholars for disagreeing with him. He also held families accountable for family members' individual crimes. Shi Huangdi's policies led to great resentment of Qin authority. When he died in 210 B.C., many communities rebelled, and the dynasty ended less than ten years later.

The Han Dynasty. After the Qin dynasty collapsed, a peasant general named Liu Bang founded the Han dynasty, which lasted 400 years. Liu Bang hoped to maintain the authority of the Qin state, but also invited Confucian scholars to advise him, bringing Confucian ethics into his government.

Wudi, who ruled from 140 to 87 B.C., was the strongest Han emperor. During his reign the Confucian scholarly advisors became an organized **civil service**. Entrance to this service depended on competitive exams that covered the **Confucian Five Classics**, which were believed to offer useful information on governing. Many of the best scholars, known as **mandarins**, controlled the government bureaucracy. It was possible for anyone to take the exams, but few peasants could afford the expensive education needed to pass them.

Wudi greatly expanded the empire. Trying to control trade, he challenged the Xiongnu, a group of nomads to the northwest. Although he attempted to defeat the Xiongnu using force, diplomacy, and bribery, the conflict continued.

In order to maintain the huge empire they created, the Han government taxed the Chinese peasants heavily. The peasants revolted, and in the A.D. 100s they were joined by other groups, weakening the empire. In A.D. 220 Ts'ao P'ei overthrew the last Han ruler and new kingdoms emerged in the west and south.

The Growth of Chinese Civilization. Chinese culture flourished during the Qin and Han dynasties. Society was based on the same values that governed the family—respect and obedience. The family, not the individual, was central to Chinese society. Since Confucian doctrine claimed that equality between men and women would result in social disharmony, men ruled the family and women had little independence. However, some women did achieve positions of authority. One such woman was Ban Zhao, who became a Han imperial historian.

Most families lived as peasant farmers in villages, where they faced the challenge of raising food and fulfilling the government's heavy demands in the areas of taxes and labor. To ease these pressures, Han government created

a policy of **leveling**, which allowed the government to regulate crop prices. Qin and Han policies promoted commerce by controlling the Central Asian trade routes known as the **Silk Road**.

Science also flourished during the Qin and Han periods. For example, Chinese astronomers calculated the length of the year and discovered sunspots. Two important inventions were paper and woodblock printing. Chinese doctors practiced **acupuncture**, a method that treated illness using needles. The Qin and Han dynasties also developed many elements of later Chinese civilization, including a belief in Confucian ethics and in the importance of groups over individuals.

Political Disunion and the Rise of Buddhism. After the fall of the Han dynasty, China entered a period of enormous political and economic instability. Nomadic tribes attacked northern China and wars between kingdoms within China were fierce. Eventually, the northern nomads adopted Chinese ways and customs. They encouraged the spread of Buddhism, which gave many Chinese a promise of spiritual salvation during a time of chaos.

Answer the questions below in your own words and in complete sentence. Highlight your evidence.

1. What methods did the Qin dynasty use to control its empire?

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2. How did the rule of Liu Bang and Wudi differ from that of Shi Huangdi?

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3. Why did the Han Empire crumble?

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4. What role did the family play in Chinese life?

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5. What advances did Qin and Han scientists make?

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6. What was China like after the fall of the Han empire?

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