The Tang Dynasty (618–907)

Reunification of China

Several strong Tang rulers completed the work of reunifying China begun in the previous Sui Dynasty.
• Land in the north and west was recovered. Korea was re-conquered.
• Civil service examinations were given again. This placed talented candidates in official positions, helping to strengthen the government.
• The road and canal systems were expanded.
• Foreign trade was promoted.
• A land distribution program was begun. Peasants were given land.
• Agricultural methods and farming tools increased food production.
• A law code was written, making laws uniform throughout the empire.

1. Why was the renewal of the civil service exam a positive step for a reunified China?
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2. Identify at least three improvements that benefited the people the most. Explain which one you think is the most important.
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3. Identify two ways in which giving land to the peasants helped make life better for all of China.
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Spread of Buddhism

By the first century, missionaries and merchants from India had brought Buddhist ideas to China. Buddhists believed in the **Four Noble Truths**:
• Life is filled with suffering.
• The cause of this suffering is people’s desire for worldly pleasures.
• The way to end all suffering is to end all desires.
• The way to reach enlightenment is to follow the Eightfold Path.

In the chaos and disorder following the collapse of the Han Dynasty in A.D. 220, people were attracted to this message. Buddhism spread rapidly. From China, Buddhism spread to Korea and from there to Japan. During the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism became a more permanent part of Chinese culture. Different branches developed, including Ch’an or Zen Buddhism. A later Tang emperor suppressed Buddhism to gain the wealth of the Buddhist monasteries. After this, Buddhism in China declined.

5. What are the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism? Why were people attracted to these teachings?
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6. Where did Buddhism spread after reaching China?
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7. Why did Buddhism decline during the Tang Dynasty?
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Wu Zhao

"Wu Zhao was the only woman to take the title of emperor. She ruled during the Tang Dynasty. Wu Zhao cut taxes, raised the salaries of government officials, reduced expensive military operations, and reformed the government."

4. What most likely led Wu Zhao to take the steps written in the description above?
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