Outline Lecture Fourteen—The Tang Bureaucracy

General Chronology:
Official end of the Han—220 CE
Three Kingdoms—3rd century
Period of Division or Six Dynasties—4th to 6th centuries
    Northern Wei—4th to 6th centuries
Sui Unification—589-618
Tang Dynasty—7th to 10th

I) The Process Towards Unification
   a) Northern Wei
      i) Momentum for political integration from the Taba Huns
      ii) Gradual process of unifying the north
          (1) Capital at Luoyang
      iii) Domestic Management Patterns
          (1) Strengthening central authority, undermining local power
              (a) Rule of Avoidance
          (2) “Nationalization of agricultural land”—Juntian or Equal-field system
              (a) Edict of 485
              (b) Edict of 486 on rural reorganization
   b) Sui Unification 589
      i) The Sino-Turkic founder of the Sui, Wendi (Yang Jian)
      ii) Integrated commerce of north and south, facilitated by the Grand Canal
      iii) Required heavy taxes and conscript labor

II) Tang Dynasty 618-906
   a) Social Organization
      i) Tang elaboration of the Juntian system
      ii) Confiscated land from large estates to redistribute to peasants
   b) Centralized Bureaucracy
      i) Establishment of a highly structured and professional meritocracy
          (1) Introduction of the rigorous Jinshi exam
          (2) Well-defined bureaucratic structure with different branches
      ii) Absolutism of the emperor
   c) Two examples
      i) Taizong (626-649)
          (1) Focused on the practical imperatives of ruling, not empty symbols
          (2) Conscientious pursuit of good government
      ii) Xuanzong (713-756)
          (1) Life in Xuanzong’s palace
          (2) Obsession with Yang Guifei
          (3) An Lushan Rebellion 755

III) China’s Greatest Anomaly—Empress Wu (626-706)
   a) Wu Zetian’s or Empress Wu’s background
i) Entered the palace as one of the “talented women”

ii) Rise to Power
  (1) From 652 on, Wu Zetian began to challenge aristocratic factions
      (a) Empress Wang vs. Wu Zetian
      (b) “Let those witches get drunk to the bone!”
  (2) Purges of princes—her own son

iii) Symbolic assertion of female power
  (1) Feng-shan ritual
  (2) “Precious Chart”

b) Excesses of Power
  i) Founder of a new Zhou Dynasty (690-705)
  ii) Indulgence towards Xue Huaiyi
  iii) Network of informants and spies—reign of terror
  iv) Her final demise in her 70s

c) Her complex legacy
  i) The “cloud” of male prejudice in history
  ii) Her personal struggle for power may have also strengthened central authority
      (1) Aspirations of the “Twelve-point Memorial”
      (2) Cultivate able officials and scholars
  iii) Scant evidence of opposition from ministers and common people during her reign