

1. The Tang dynasty enjoyed a long period of stable government and political rule bolstered by its strong military and centralized civil service examination system. It was also an era of great territorial expansion and prosperity. The capital city of Chang'an (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi province), became a great cosmopolitan center situated at the terminus of the Central Asian silk route, attracting foreign visitors and goods from various oasis towns located along the Taklimakan Desert. The cultural achievements of the Tang were no less impressive; the arts and poetry of this period represent a pinnacle of Chinese civilization.

2. Although the Sui Dynasty lasted only a short while it was a foundation for the Tang dynasty. The Tang Dynasty started in 618 and ruled for 300 years. During this period China expanded its borders on all sides. It also expanded roads and canals to bring the country together. Such a large empire needed officials to run it. So the Tang adopted the Confucian government's ideas. The Tang government system was one of the most advanced and complex in the world at that time.

3. The Tang dynasty was founded by the Sui dynasty general, Li Yuan (566–635), who was posthumously known as Emperor Gaozu. Retaining many Sui administrative institutions and policies, the early Tang government was highly centralized and depended on a complex system of administrative law. Over time, the authority of the ruling aristocracy gave way to professional bureaucrats who were recruited through the civil examination system. The reign of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756) is considered one of the most brilliant cultural periods of the Tang. Xuanzong was himself a scholar and patron of the arts, and his court became a center of cultural activity.

4. The Tang was also an active period of cultural interaction between China and her neighbors. Buddhism flourished as foreign missionaries, monks and teachers passed through Chang'an, bringing with them new ideas and religious texts that were initially welcomed by the Tang rulers. The monk Xuanzang (602–664) visited India and Nepal, returning with Buddhist texts, many of which were then translated into Chinese under government sponsorship. By the mid-ninth century, however, as China turned inward and government finances grew strained, Buddhism suffered significant persecution. Under the great proscription of 842–845, millions of Buddhist monks and nuns were forcibly secularized and placed back in the tax rolls, while Buddhist land and temples were reclaimed by the state.