S2 Chinese History Practice Paper: The Warring States and the Qin Unification, Qin-Han Centralised Government, the Han Golden Age and External Relations, the Wei-Jin and Northern-Southern Dynasties, the Sui-Tang Golden Age and Institutions, Tang Cultural Exchange and Decline

S2 | Chinese History | Time: 75 minutes | Total: 100 marks | 24 questions

---

Part 1: The Warring States and the Qin Unification

Answer in complete sentences and use accurate historical terms.

1. List the seven major states of the Warring States period. [4]

Answer: Qi, Chu, Yan, Han, Zhao, Wei and Qin, seven states in all, hence the name the seven major states of the Warring States period.

2. State two reasons why Qin was able to unify the six states, with brief explanation. [5]

Answer: First, Shang Yang reforms rewarded farming and warfare and extended the county system, making Qin rich and strong; second, Qin used the strategy of befriending distant states and attacking nearby ones, defeating its rivals one by one, and enjoyed a defensible geographical position in the Guanzhong region.

3. After unification Qin adopted the commandery-and-county system. Explain how it differed from Zhou enfeoffment in the way officials were appointed. [4]

Answer: Under enfeoffment, lords were invested by the king and their titles and lands were hereditary; under the commandery-and-county system, governors and magistrates were appointed and dismissed directly by the central government, held no hereditary right and could be transferred at any time, concentrating power at the centre.

4. Qin unified China in 221 BC and fell in 207 BC. Calculate the length of the Qin dynasty and give one reason for its rapid collapse. [4]

Answer: 221 - 207 = 14 years. Reasons for the rapid collapse include harsh laws, heavy corvee labour and taxes for projects such as the Great Wall, the Epang Palace and the mausoleum of the First Emperor, which provoked widespread resentment, together with resistance from the old noble families of the six states.

Part 2: Qin-Han Centralised Government

Distinguish clearly between institutions and their duties.

5. Name the three senior ministers of the Qin-Han central government and their main duties. [4]

Answer: The Chancellor handled administration and assisted the emperor in governing; the Grand Commandant commanded the military; the Imperial Secretary supervised officials and assisted the Chancellor.

6. Which measures did Emperor Wu of Han use to weaken the power of the regional kingdoms? Give two. [4]

Answer: First, the Decree of Extending Grace ordered kings to divide their fiefs among all their sons, so kingdoms shrank with each generation; second, marquises were stripped of rank over impure tribute gold, while laws restricted kings from recruiting officials and accumulating wealth.

7. Emperor Gaozu took the throne in 202 BC and Emperor Wu ascended in 141 BC. Calculate the interval between the two events. [4]

Answer: 202 - 141 = 61 years.

8. Compare the early Han mixed system of commanderies and kingdoms with the Qin commandery-and-county system in local administration. [5]

Answer: In early Han, commanderies were run by centrally appointed officials while imperial relatives were enfeoffed as kings with considerable autonomy, including taxation and appointment of their own staff; Qin applied commanderies and counties everywhere with all local heads appointed by the centre, giving a higher degree of centralisation.

Part 3: The Han Golden Age and External Relations

Show your working in calculations and explain cause and effect in history questions.

9. The reigns of Emperors Wen and Jing are called a golden age. State two policies and their effects. [4]

Answer: First, light corvee and low taxes, with land tax cut from one fifteenth to one thirtieth, easing the burden on farmers and reviving agriculture; second, a policy of letting the people rest with simpler laws, giving social stability and full granaries that later funded Emperor Wu external campaigns.

10. What was the purpose of Zhang Qian missions to the Western Regions, and what resulted from them? [4]

Answer: The aim was to ally with the Yuezhi against the Xiongnu. No alliance was formed, but Zhang Qian brought back knowledge of the geography, products and routes of the Western Regions, opening trade between Han China and Central Asia along what became known as the Silk Road.

11. The Silk Road ran about 1,900 km from Chang an to Dunhuang and about 1,500 km from Dunhuang to Kashgar. If a caravan travelled 25 km a day, calculate the total distance and the number of days needed. [4]

Answer: Total distance 1,900 + 1,500 = 3400 km; days 3400 / 25 = 136 days, about four and a half months.

12. Emperor Wu reigned from 141 BC to 87 BC; the Western Han lasted from 202 BC to AD 8. Calculate the length of his reign and its share of the dynasty, to one decimal place. [4]

Answer: Reign 141 - 87 = 54 years; Western Han 202 + 8 = 210 years; share 54 / 210 x 100 = 25.7 per cent.

Part 4: The Wei-Jin and Northern-Southern Dynasties

Distinguish polities and dates, and explain the effects of policies.

13. Name the Three Kingdoms, their founders and founding years, and calculate how long the period lasted from the founding of Wei to the fall of Wu. [4]

Answer: Wei under Cao Pi in 220, Shu under Liu Bei in 221 and Wu under Sun Quan, who took the imperial title in 229. From 220 to the fall of Wu in 280 is 60 years.

14. Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei adopted sinicisation. Give three specific measures. [4]

Answer: Moving the capital to Luoyang; changing Xianbei surnames to Chinese ones, for example Tuoba to Yuan; banning the Xianbei language at court in favour of Chinese; adopting Chinese dress; encouraging marriage with Chinese families. Any three.

15. Great clans grew powerful in the Wei-Jin period. Explain the institutional cause and one consequence. [4]

Answer: Institutionally, the nine-rank system graded candidates through arbiters who weighed family background above ability, so high grades went to great families and low grades to commoners. As a result, leading clans monopolised offices and land, social classes hardened and the centre struggled to recruit talent.

16. The Jiangnan region was developed during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Give two reasons. [4]

Answer: First, war in the north drove large numbers of migrants south, bringing labour, advanced farming techniques and capital; second, the south was relatively stable, with governments rewarding land reclamation and water works, and it had favourable natural conditions.

Part 5: The Sui-Tang Golden Age and Institutions

Be precise about the division of duties and show working in calculations.

17. Sui was founded in 581, unified China by defeating Chen in 589 and fell in 618. Calculate its duration and state one function of the Grand Canal. [5]

Answer: Duration 618 - 581 = 37 years. The Grand Canal linked north and south, easing grain transport and troop movement, promoting exchange of goods and culture, and strengthening central control over the south.

18. Explain how the three departments of the Tang central government divided their work. [4]

Answer: The Secretariat drafted edicts and decided policy; the Chancellery reviewed and could return them; the Department of State Affairs implemented policy through its six ministries. The three checked one another, with the emperor making the final decision.

19. What was the significance of the imperial examination system for Tang society? Give two points. [4]

Answer: First, it broke the monopoly of aristocratic clans over office, letting men of humble birth enter service through ability, widening the base of government; second, selection became fairer and more open, encouraging social mobility and the growth of education and letters.

20. Emperor Taizong ascended in 626 and died in 649. Calculate the length of his reign and give one cause of the Zhenguan golden age. [4]

Answer: Reign 649 - 626 = 23 years. Causes include willingness to accept criticism, as in his use of Wei Zheng, appointment of able officials, light taxes and corvee, and refinement of the three departments and the examination system, producing clean government and social stability.

Part 6: Tang Cultural Exchange and Decline

State the direction and effect of each exchange, and show working in calculations.

21. Explain the contributions of Xuanzang journey to the west and Jianzhen voyages east. [4]

Answer: Xuanzang travelled to India for Buddhist scriptures, brought back large numbers of texts and led their translation, advancing Sino-Indian exchange in Buddhism and geography; Jianzhen reached Japan and taught monastic precepts, architecture, medicine and calligraphy, spreading Tang culture eastward.

22. Tang Chang an was a cosmopolitan capital. Give two concrete indications. [5]

Answer: The eastern and western markets drew merchants from Persia and the Arab world trading in gems, spices and horses; foreign envoys, students and monks resided in the city, where Zoroastrian, Nestorian, Manichaean and Muslim places of worship coexisted, and Japan repeatedly sent missions to study Tang institutions and culture.

23. The An Lushan rebellion broke out in 755 and ended in 763. Calculate its duration and give two effects on the Tang. [4]

Answer: It lasted 763 - 755 = 8 years. Effects included weakened central authority and the rise of autonomous military governors, the breakdown of the equal-field and militia systems replaced by the two-tax system, and large-scale southward migration that accelerated the shift of the economic centre to the south.

24. The Tang was founded in 618 and fell in 907. Calculate the length of the dynasty and the interval from its founding to the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion. [4]

Answer: Duration 907 - 618 = 289 years; from founding to the rebellion 755 - 618 = 137 years.
