Han Dynasty: General Characteristics

Being a new dynasty that occurred after the Zhou, The Qin, led by Qin Huangdi, arose to reverse the process of political decay. Ruling a very military driven dynasty, the Qin was a very centralized dynasty. The Qin left a strong foundation for the Han dynasty retaining the same centralized government. The Han rulers retained the same centralized administration of the Qin but sought to reduce the brutal repression of that period (Stearns text, p.58).

The Qin who was very military driven and powerful to shift things in the emperors choosing, followed up on centralization by expanding the Chinese land, extending it to present day Hong Kong and in any event, impacting northern Vietnam as well. As a powerful emperor, Qin Huangdi was a very ruthless ruler, and this allowed him to enforce through legalism and create a bureaucracy in which he cautious as he chose his officials (Stearns text, p.57). At the fall of the Qin, the Han dynasty rose to power adapting the centralized administration of the Qin, but they wanted to reduce the ruthlessness of their way of suppressing those who opposed.

The Han Dynasty was a bureaucracy which was a strong political structure.
The Han increased the bureaucracy's resources. Which is why the Han
could be controlled so effectively. The roles of the scholar-gentry were to run the estates and provide bureaucrats. Most gentry families had people to both protect them and to also make sure commoners stayed in their place (Stearns, p.66). The tensions around the imperial throne was the tension in Chinese society which showed Confucian beliefs in mutual respect were combined with strict policing which got people who were presumed guilty, arrested and subjected to torture before trial (Stearns, p.69).

The economic challenges that the dynasty faced was that wealth of merchants led to considerable amounts of scorn due to the Confucian emphasis on learning and political service. The economy of the Han dynasty began damaged due to the laws and policy of the previous dynasty, the Qin dynasty. Heavy taxes on peasants took a great toll towards the economy. The Han dynasty’s first emperors tried to fix this by changing how peasants and merchants were taxed. The emperors lowered taxes toward small landowners and increased taxes toward merchants.

I would argue that the Hans dynasty’s greatest strength was how they excelled technologically in both agriculturally and manufacturing. They implemented animals to help increase their daily productivity. They introduced Ox-drawn plows in their daily life and a new collar for draft animals. This allowed the animals to not be choke by the wagons or plows. This was used in other places in the world. They also mastered the manufacturing of silk which was put them as the main place to have silk to trade. All in all, the Han dynasty was very impressive due the idea that they adapted from the Qin Dynasty which was very brutal and military driven, and made it better making them rule in such a vast territory very effectively.