

Chinese Civilization

PREHISTORY

Sources for the earliest history Until recently we were dependent for the beginnings of Chinese history on the written Chinese tradition. According to these sources China's history began either about 4000 B.C. or about 2700 B.C. with a succession of wise emperors who "invented" the elements of a civilization, such as clothing, the preparation of food, marriage, and a state system; they instructed their people in these things, and so brought China, as early as in the third millennium B.C., to an astonishingly high cultural level. However, all we know of the origin of civilizations makes this of itself entirely improbable; no other civilization in the world originated in any such way. As time went on, Chinese historians found more and more to say about primeval times. All these narratives were collected in the great

imperial history that appeared at the beginning of the Manchu epoch. That book was translated into French, and all the works written in Western languages until recent years on Chinese history and civilization have been based in the last resort on that translation.

The Peking Man Man makes his appearance in the Far East at a time when remains in other parts of the world are very rare and are disputed. He appears as the so-called "Peking Man", whose bones were found in caves of Chou-k'ou-tien south of Peking. The Peking Man is vastly different from the men of today, and forms a special branch of the human race, closely allied to the Pithecanthropus of Java. The formation of later races of mankind from these types has not yet been traced, if it occurred at all.

Ancient **China** produced what has become the oldest, still extant, culture in the world. The name 'China' comes from the **Sanskrit** *Cina* (derived from the name of the Chinese **Qin Dynasty**, pronounced 'Chin') which was translated as 'Cin' by the Persians and seems to have become popularized through **trade** along the **Silk Road** from China to the rest of the world. The Romans and the Greeks knew the country as 'Seres', "the land where **silk** comes from". Well before the advent of recognizable **civilization** in the region, the land was occupied by hominids. Peking Man, a skull fossil discovered in 1927 CE near Beijing, lived in the area between 700,000 to 200,000 years ago and Yuanmou Man, whose remains were found in Yuanmou in 1965 CE, inhabited the land 1.7 million years ago. Evidence uncovered with these finds shows that these early inhabitants knew how to fashion stone tools and use fire.

THE FIRST DYNASTIES

From these small villages and farming communities grew centralized government; the first of which was the prehistoric **Xia Dynasty**(c. 2070-1600 BCE). The Xia Dynasty was considered, for many years, more myth than fact until excavations in the 1960's and 1970's CE uncovered sites which argued strongly for its existence. **Bronze** works and tombs clearly point to an evolutionary period of development between disparate **Stone Age** villages and a recognizable cohesive civilization. The dynasty was founded by Yu the Great who worked relentlessly for thirteen years to control the flooding of the Yellow River which routinely destroyed the farmer's crops. He was so focused on his work that it was said he did not return home once in all those years, even though he seems to have passed by his house on at least three occasions, and this dedication inspired others to follow him. After he had controlled the flooding, Yu conquered the Sanmiao tribes and was named successor (by the then-ruler, Shun), reigning until his **death**. Yu established the hereditary system of succession and, so, the concept of dynasty which has become most familiar. The ruling class and the elite lived in urban clusters while the peasant population, which supported their lifestyle, remained largely agrarian, living in rural areas. Yu's son, Qi, ruled after him and power remained in the hands of the family until the last Xia ruler, Jie, was overthrown by **Tang** who established the **Shang Dynasty** (1600-1046 BCE).

Tang was from the kingdom of Shang. The dates popularly assigned to him (1675-1646 BCE) do not in any way correspond to the known events in which he took part and must be considered erroneous.

What is known is that he was the ruler, or at least a very important personage, in the kingdom of Shang who, around 1600 BCE, led a revolt against Jie and defeated his forces at the **Battle** of Mingtiao. The extravagance of the Xia court, and the resultant burden on the populace, is thought to have led to this uprising. Tang then assumed leadership of the land, lowered taxes, suspended the grandiose building projects begun by Jie (which were draining the kingdoms of resources) and ruled with such wisdom and efficiency that art and culture were allowed to flourish. **Writing** developed under the Shang Dynasty as well as bronze metallurgy, **architecture**, and **religion**.

Prior to the Shang, the people worshipped many gods with one supreme god, Shangti, as head of the **pantheon** (the same pattern found in other cultures). Shangti was considered 'the great ancestor' who presided over victory in **war**, **agriculture**, the weather, and good government. Because he was so remote and so busy, however, the people seem to have required more immediate intercessors for their needs and so the practice of ancestor worship began. When someone died, it was thought, they attained divine powers and could be called upon for assistance in times of need (similar to the **Roman** belief in the *Parentes*). This practice led to highly sophisticated rituals dedicated to appeasing the spirits of the ancestors which eventually included ornate burials in grand tombs filled with all one would need to enjoy a comfortable afterlife. The king, in addition to his secular duties, served as chief officiate and mediator between the living and the dead and his rule was considered ordained by divine **law**. Although the famous **Mandate of Heaven** was developed by the later **Zhou Dynasty**, the idea of linking a just ruler with divine will has its roots in the beliefs fostered by the Shang.

THE ZHOU DYNASTY

Around the year 1046 BCE, King **Wu**, of the province of Zhou, rebelled against King Zhou of Shang and defeated his forces at the Battle of Muye, establishing the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046- 256 BCE). 1046-771 BCE marks the Western Zhou Period while 771-226 BCE marks the Eastern Zhou Period. The Mandate of Heaven was invoked by the Duke of Zhou, King Wu's younger brother, to legitimize the revolt as he felt the Shang were no longer acting in the interests of the people. The Mandate of Heaven was thus defined as the gods' blessing on a just ruler and rule by divine mandate. When the government no longer served the will of the gods, that government would be overthrown. Further, it was stipulated that there could be only one legitimate ruler of China and that his rule should be legitimized by his proper conduct as a steward of the lands entrusted him by heaven. Rule could be passed from father to son but only if the child possessed the necessary virtue to rule. This mandate would later be often manipulated by various rulers entrusting succession to unworthy progeny.

Under the Zhou, culture flourished and civilization spread. Writing was codified and iron metallurgy became increasingly sophisticated. The greatest and best known Chinese philosophers and poets, **Confucius**, **Mencius**, **Mo Ti** (Mot Zu), **Lao-Tzu**, Tao Chien, and the military strategist **Sun-Tzu** (if he existed as depicted), all come from the Zhou period in China and the time of the Hundred Schools of Thought. The **chariot**, which was introduced to the land under the Shang, became more fully developed by the Zhou. It should be noted that these periods and dynasties did not begin nor end as neatly as they seem to in history books and the Zhou Dynasty shared many qualities with the Shang (including language and religion). While historians find it necessary, for clarity's sake, to break events into periods, the Zhou Dynasty remained extant through the following recognized periods known as The Spring and Autumn Period and The **Warring States Period**.

THE SPRING & AUTUMN PERIOD & THE WARRING STATES

During the Spring and Autumn Period (772-476 BCE and so called from the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the official chronicle of the state at the time and an early source mentioning General Sun-Tzu), the Zhou government became decentralized in their move to the new capital at **Luoyang**, marking the end of the 'Western Zhou' period and the beginning of 'Eastern Zhou'. This is the period most noted for advances in **philosophy**, poetry, and the arts and saw the rise of Confucian, Taoist, and Mohist thought. At the same time, however, the different states were breaking away from central rule by Luoyang and proclaiming themselves sovereign. This, then, led to the so-called Warring States Period (476-221 BCE) in which seven states fought with each other for control. The seven states were Chu, **Han**, Qi, Qin, Wei, Yan, and Zhao all of whom considered themselves sovereign but none of whom felt confident in claiming the Mandate of Heaven still held by the Zhou of Luoyang. All seven of the states used the same tactics and observed the same rules of conduct in battle and so none could gain the advantage over the others. This situation was exploited by the pacifist philosopher Mo Ti, a skilled engineer, who made it his mission to provide each state with equal knowledge of fortifications and siege ladders in hopes of neutralizing any one state's advantage and so ending the war. His efforts were unsuccessful however and, between 262 and 260 BCE, the state of Qin gained supremacy over Zhao, finally defeating them at The Battle of Changping.

A Qin statesman by the name of Shang **Yang** (died 338 BCE), a great believer in efficiency and law, had re-cast the Qin understanding of **warfare** to focus on victory at any cost. Whether Sun-Tzu or Shang Yang is to be credited with reformation of military protocol and strategy in China depends on one's acceptance of Sun-Tzu's historicity. Whether Sun-Tzu existed as people claim, however, it is very probable that Shang Yang was acquainted with the famous work, *The Art of War*, which bears Sun-Tzu's name as author. Prior to these reforms, warfare was considered a nobleman's game of skill with very set rules dictated by courtesy and the perceived will of heaven. One did not attack the weak or the unprepared and one was expected to delay engagement until an opponent had mobilized and formed ranks on the field. Shang advocated total war in pursuit of victory and counselled taking the enemies' forces by whatever means lay at hand. Shang's principles were known in Qin, and made use of at Changping (where over 450,000 captured Zhao soldiers were executed after the battle) giving the Qin the advantage they had been waiting for. Still, they did not make further effective use of these tactics until the rise of Ying Zheng, King of Qin. Utilizing Shang's directives, and with an army of considerable size utilizing chariots and iron weapons, Ying Zheng emerged from the Warring States conflict supreme in 221 BCE, subduing and unifying the other six states under his rule and proclaiming himself **Shi Huangdi** - 'First Emperor' - of China.

THE QIN DYNASTY

Shi Huangdi thus established the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE) which is also known as the Imperial Era in China. He ordered the destruction of the walled fortifications which had separated the different states and commissioned the building of a great **wall** along the northern border of his kingdom. Though little remains today of Shi Huangdi's original wall, The **Great Wall of China** was begun under his rule.

It stretched for over 5,000 kilometres (3,000 miles) across hill and plain, from the boundaries of **Korea** in the east to the troublesome Ordos Desert in the west. It was an enormous logistical undertaking, though for much of its course it incorporated lengths of earlier walls built by the separate

Chinese kingdoms to defend their northern frontiers in the fourth and third centuries. (Scarre and Fagan, 382).

Shi Huangdi also strengthened the infrastructure through road building which helped to increase trade through ease of travel.

Five trunk roads led from the imperial capital at Xianyang, each provided with police forces and posting stations. Most of these roads were of rammed-earth construction and were 15 metres (50 feet) wide. The longest ran southwest over 7,500 kilometres (4,500 miles) to the frontier region of Yunnan. So precipitous was the countryside that sections of the road had to be built out from vertical cliff faces on projecting timber galleries. (Scarre and Fagan, 382).

Shi Huangdi also expanded the boundaries of his empire, built the Grand Canal in the south, redistributed land and, initially, was a fair and just ruler.

While he made great strides in building projects and military campaigns, his rule became increasingly characterized by a heavy hand in domestic policy. Claiming the Mandate from Heaven, he suppressed all philosophies save the **Legalism** which had been developed by Shang Yang and, heeding the counsel of his chief advisor, Li Siu, he ordered the destruction of any history or philosophy books which did not correspond to Legalism, his family line, the state of Qin, or himself.

Since books were then written on strips of bamboo fastened with swivel pins, and a volume might be of some weight, the scholars who sought to evade the order were put to many difficulties. A number of them were detected; tradition says that many of them were sent to labor on the Great Wall, and that four hundred and sixty were put to death. Nevertheless some of the literati memorized the complete works of Confucius and passed them on by word of mouth to equal memories. (Durant, 697).

This act, along with Shi Huangdi's suppression of general freedoms, including freedom of speech, made him progressively more unpopular.

The ancestor worship of the past, and the land of the dead, began to interest the emperor more than his realm of the living and **Shi Huangti** became increasingly engrossed in what this other world consisted of and how he might avoid traveling there. He seems to have developed an obsession with death, became increasingly paranoid regarding his personal safety, and ardently sought after immortality. His desire to provide for himself an afterlife commensurate with his present one led him to commission a **palace** built for his **tomb** and an army of over 8,000 terracotta warriors created to serve him in eternity. This ceramic army, buried with him, also included terracotta chariots, cavalry, a commander in chief, and assorted birds and animals. He is said to have died while on a quest for an elixir of immortality and Li Siu, hoping to gain control of the government, kept his death a secret until he could alter his will to name his pliable son, Hu-Hai, as heir. This plan proved untenable, however, as the young prince showed himself to be quite unstable, executing many, and initiating a widespread rebellion in the land. Shortly after Shi Huangdi's death, the Qin Dynasty quickly collapsed through the intrigue and ineptitude of people like Hu-Hai, Li Siu, and another advisor, Zhao Gao, and the **Han Dynasty** began with the accession of Liu-Bang.

THE CHU-HAN CONTENTION

With the fall of the Qin Dynasty, China was plunged into chaos. Two generals emerged among the forces which rebelled against the Qin, Prince Liu-Bang of Hanzhong and King Xiang-Yu of the state of Chu, who fought for control of the government. Xiang-Yu, who had proven himself the most formidable opponent of the Qin, awarded Liu-Bang the title of 'King of the Han' in recognition of Liu-Bang's decisive defeat of the Qin forces in the final battle. The two former allies quickly became antagonists, however, in the power struggle known as the Chu-Han contention until Xiang-Yu negotiated the Treaty of Hong Canal and brought a temporary peace. Xiang-Yu suggested dividing China under the rule of the Chu in the east and the Han in the west but Liu-Bang wanted a united China under Han rule and, breaking the treaty, resumed hostilities. At the **Battle of Gaixia** in 202 BCE, Liu-Bang's great general, Han-Xin, trapped and defeated the forces of Chu under Xiang-Yu and Liu-Bang was proclaimed emperor (known to posterity as Emperor Gaozu of Han). Xiang-Yu committed suicide but his family was allowed to live and even serve in government positions. Liu-Bang treated all of his former adversaries with respect and united the land under his rule. He pushed back the nomadic Xiongnu tribes, who had been making incursions into China, and made peace with the other states which had risen in rebellion against the failing Qin Dynasty. The Han Dynasty (which derives its name from Liu-Bang's home in Hanzhong province) would rule China, with a brief interruption, for the next 400 years, from 202 BCE to 220 CE.

THE HAN DYNASTY

The resultant peace initiated by Liu-Bang brought the stability necessary for culture to again thrive and grow. Trade with the west began during this time and arts and technology increased in sophistication. The Han are considered the first dynasty to write their history down but, as Shi Huangti destroyed so many of the written records of those who came before him, this claim is often disputed. There is no doubt, however, that great advances were made under the Han in every area of culture. The Yellow Emperor's *Canon of Medicine*, China's earliest written record on medicine was codified during the Han Dynasty. Gunpowder, which the Chinese had already invented, became more refined. Paper was invented at this time and writing became more sophisticated. Liu-Bang embraced **Confucianism** and made it the exclusive philosophy of the government, setting a pattern which would continue on to the present day. Even so, unlike Shi Huangti, he practised tolerance for all other philosophies and, as a result, **literature** and education flourished under his reign. He reduced taxes and disbanded his army who, nevertheless, rallied without delay when called upon.

After his death in 195 BCE, the crown prince Liu Ying succeeded him and continued his policies. These programmes maintained stability and culture enabling the greatest of the Han emperors, Wu Ti (also known as Han Wu the Great, 141- 87 BCE), to embark on his enterprises of expansion, public works, and cultural initiatives. He sent his emissary Zhang Qian to the west in 138 BCE which resulted in the official opening of the Silk Road in 130 BCE. Confucianism was further incorporated as the official doctrine of the government and Wu Ti established schools throughout the empire to foster literacy and teach Confucian precepts. He also reformed transportation, roads, and trade and decreed many other public projects, employing millions as state workers in these undertakings. After Wu Ti, his successors, more or less, maintained his vision for China and enjoyed equal success.

Increase in wealth led to the rise of large estates and general prosperity but, for the peasants who worked the land, life became increasingly difficult. In 9 CE, the acting regent, Wang Mang, usurped control of the government claiming the Mandate of Heaven for himself and declaring an end to the Han Dynasty. Wang Mang founded the Xin Dynasty (9-23 CE) on a platform of extensive land reform and redistribution of wealth. He initially had enormous support from the peasant population and was opposed by the landowners. His programmes, however, were poorly conceived and executed resulting in widespread unemployment and resentment. Uprisings, and extensive flooding of the Yellow River, further destabilized Wang Mang's rule and he was assassinated by an angry mob of the peasants on whose behalf he had ostensibly seized the government and initiated his reforms.

THE FALL OF HAN & RISE OF THE XIN DYNASTY

The rise of the Xin Dynasty ended the period known as Western Han and its demise led to the establishment of the Eastern Han period. Emperor Guang-Wu returned the lands to the wealthy estate owners and restored order in the land, maintaining the policies of the earlier Western Han rulers. Guang-Wu, in reclaiming lands lost under the Xin Dynasty, was forced to spend much of his time putting down rebellions and re-establishing Chinese rule in the regions of modern-day Korea and Vietnam. The Trung Sisters Rebellion of 39 CE, led by two sisters, required “ten odd thousands of men” (according to the official state record of Han) and four years to put down. Even so, the emperor consolidated his rule and even expanded his boundaries, providing stability which gave rise to an increase in trade and prosperity. By the time of the Emperor Zhang (75-88 CE), China was so prosperous that it was partners in trade with all the major nations of the day and continued in this way after his death. The Romans under **Marcus Aurelius**, in 166 CE, considered Chinese silk more precious than **gold** and paid China whatever price was asked.

Disputes between the landed gentry and the peasants, however, continued to cause problems for the government as exemplified in the Yellow Turban Rebellion and the Five Pecks of Rice Rebellion (both in 184 CE). While the Five Pecks of Rice Rebellion began as a religious conflict, it involved a large number of the peasant class at odds with the Confucian ideals of the government and the elite. The power of the government to control the people began to disintegrate until full-scale rebellion erupted. The rebel generals **Cao Cao** and Yuan-Shao then fought each other for control of the land with Cao Cao emerging victorious. Cao was then defeated at the Battle of Red Cliffs in 208 CE and China divided into three warring kingdoms: Cao Wei, Eastern Wu, and Shu Han.

The Han Dynasty was now a memory and other, shorter-lived dynasties (such as the Wei and Jin, the Wu Hu, and the **Sui**) assumed control of the government and initiated their own platforms from roughly 208-618 CE. The **Sui Dynasty** (589-618 CE) finally succeeded in reuniting China in 589 CE. The importance of the Sui Dynasty is in its implementation of highly efficient bureaucracy which streamlined the operation of government and led to greater ease in maintaining the empire. Under the Emperor Wen, and then his son, Yang, the Grand Canal was constructed, the Great Wall was enlarged and portions rebuilt, the army was increased to the largest recorded in the world at that time, and **coinage** was standardized across the realm. Literature flourished and it is thought that the famous Legend of Hua Mulan, about a young girl who takes her father's place in the army, was composed, or at least set down, at this time (the Wei Dynasty has also been cited as the era of the poem's

composition). Unfortunately, both Wen and Yang were not content with domestic stability and organized massive expeditions against the Korean peninsula. Wen had already bankrupted the treasury through his building projects and military campaigns and Yang followed his father's example and failed equally in his attempts at military **conquest**. Yang was assassinated in 618 BCE which then sparked the uprising of Li-Yuan who took control of the government and called himself Emperor Gao-Tzu of Tang.

THE TANG DYNASTY

The Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) is considered the 'golden age' of **Chinese civilization**. Gao-Tzu prudently maintained, and improved upon, the bureaucracy initiated by the Sui Dynasty while dispensing with extravagant military operations and building projects. With minor modifications, the bureaucratic policies of the Tang Dynasty are still in use in Chinese government in the modern day. Despite his efficient rule, Gao-Tzu was deposed by his son, Li-Shimin, in 626 CE. Having assassinated his father, Li-Shimin then killed his brothers and others of the noble house and assumed the title Emperor **Taizong**. After the bloody coup, however, Taizong decreed that **Buddhist** temples be built at the sites of the battles and that the fallen should be memorialized. Continuing, and building upon, the concepts of ancestor worship and the Mandate of Heaven, Taizong claimed divine will in his actions and intimated that those he had killed now were his counsellors in the afterlife. As he proved to be a remarkably efficient ruler, as well as a skilled military strategist and warrior, his coup went unchallenged and he set about the task of governing his vast empire.

Taizong followed his father's precepts in keeping much of what was good from the Sui Dynasty and improving upon it. This can be seen especially in Taizong's legal code which drew heavily on Sui concepts but expanded them for specificity of crime and punishment. He ignored his father's model of foreign policy, however, and embarked on a series of successful military campaigns which extended and secured his empire and also served to spread his legal code and Chinese culture. Trade flourished within the empire and, along the Silk Road, with the West. **Rome** having now fallen, the **Byzantine Empire** became a prime buyer of Chinese silk. By the time of the rule of Emperor **Xuanzong** (712-756 CE) China was the largest, most populous, and most prosperous country in the world. Owing to the large population, armies of many thousands of men could be conscripted into service and military campaigns against Turkish nomads or domestic rebels were swift and successful. Art, technology, and **science** all flourished under the Tang Dynasty (although the high point in the sciences is considered to be the later Sung Dynasty of 960-1234 CE) and some of the most impressive pieces of Chinese **sculpture** and **silver**-work come from this period.

THE FALL OF TANG & RISE OF THE SONG DYNASTY

Still, the central government was not universally admired and regional uprisings were a regular concern. The most important of these was the An Shi Rebellion (also known as the An Lushan Rebellion) of 755 CE. General An Lushan, a favourite of the Imperial Court, recoiled against what he saw as excessive extravagance in government. With a force of over 100,000 troops, he rebelled and declared himself the new emperor by the precepts of the Mandate of Heaven. Although his revolt was put down by 763 CE, the underlying causes of the insurrection, and further military actions, continued

to plague the government through 779 CE. The most apparent consequence of An Lushan's rebellion was a dramatic reduction in the population of China. It has been estimated that close to 36 million people died as a direct result of the rebellion, either in battle, in reprisals, or through disease and lack of resources. Trade suffered, taxes went uncollected, and the government, which had fled **Chang'an** when the revolt began, was ineffective in maintaining any kind of significant presence. The Tang Dynasty continued to suffer from domestic revolts and, after the Huang Chao Rebellion (874-884 CE) never recovered. The country broke apart into the period known as The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960 CE), with each regime claiming for itself legitimacy, until the rise of the Song Dynasty (aka Sung).

With the Song, China became stable once again and institutions, laws, and customs were further codified and integrated into the culture. Neo-Confucianism became the most popular philosophy of the country, influencing these laws and customs, and shaping the culture of China recognizable in the modern day. Still, in spite of advances in every area of civilization and culture, the age-old strife between wealthy landowners and the peasants who worked that land continued throughout the following centuries. Periodic peasant revolts were crushed as quickly as possible but no remedies for the people's grievances were ever offered and each military action continued to deal with the symptom of the problem instead of the problem itself. In 1949 CE, Mao Tse Tung led the people's revolution in China, toppling the government and instituting the People's Republic of China on the premise that, finally, everyone would be equally affluent.

River Civilization based on the Yellow river or **Huang He River** in the North and the **Yangtze River** in the South.

The Shang Dynasty: (1523-1027 BC)

- Arose at roughly the same time as the Indo-Aryan invaders assumed control of India.
- Shang s were indigenous.
- Based upon the Neolithic agricultural units in China.
- China is unique in that its growth occurred from exclusively inward procedures. Cultural diffusion...not a great factor.
- No invasions, etc...difficult to get to.
- Shang bring a long period of peaceful rule to this region.
- Much of what we know about the Shang comes from their writings.
- Excavations at Anyang (capital of Shang) and Zhengzhou have shed great light on their leadership and society.

SOCIAL CONDITION

Social Divisions: simple and sharp:

- i. Ruling **Aristocrats and bureaucrats** directed the work and life of the Shang. **Ruled like a family, kings owned slaves captured in war.**
 1. Warfare a constant feature.
- ii. Most commoners worked as **semi free serfs in agriculture.**

iii. Others were **artisans, craftsmen**.

J. Homes were Neolithic in style living in **cut out ground homes**

L. **Bronze**-gifted in its **use** but that use was limited to weapons and ceremony, tools not acceptable in this society (at least bronze one).

M. King lifestyle: houses built on pounded earth set a pattern for modern times. Royal blood after death was expected to intercede with the gods (polytheistic-animist) much like the religious structure in Ancient Egypt. Ancestor worships a result and very significant factor in Chinese life.

N. Shang Religion: The Shang worshipped the Shang Ti. This god ruled as a supreme god over lesser gods, the sun, the moon, the wind, the rain, and other natural forces and places. Highly ritualized, ancestor worship became a part of the Shang religion. Sacrifice to the gods and the ancestors were also a major part of the Shang religion. When a king died, hundreds of slaves and prisoners were often sacrificed and buried with him. People were also sacrificed in lower numbers when important events, such as the founding of a palace or temple, occurred.

III. **Chinese Writing**: developed much later in the Chinese civilization than in their ancient counterparts.

A. Rooted in Shang Religion

B. Kings were high priests and wanted questions answered of the gods, in the form of oracle bones.

C. Had thousands of phonetic values-pictographic in nature.

D. The most complex system in the ancient world.

E. Will later be simplified and made accessible to all Chinese.

F. Spread throughout the Oriental world.

G. Important to have a unified script with hopes of political unification.

Triumph of the **Zhou or Chou (Joe)**

A. Began as a small realm in the basin of the Wei River, a tributary of Yellow.

B. Agricultural persons who emigrated into the region, from the North-western part of Asia

C. Highly sophisticated masters of charioteering and Bronze works.

D. Gradually the Zhou (Joe) became increasingly dissatisfied with Shang rule and overtook their dynasty.

E. Took China took great levels, expanding the Empire to boundaries beyond the Shang. F. As in Mesopotamia, the Zhou adopted much of the cultural achievements and legacies of the Shang. For tips on these matters see your cultural portrait assignments.

G. They succeeded in consolidating their gains and bringing about a relative area of peace.

H. To justify their conquest the Shang were discredited of they're rule as violators of the "Mandate from Heaven", claiming that the mandate had been passed from the Shang house to the more worthy Zhou.

I. The next challenge governing an area of this size? They did several things to conquer this challenge.

i. Moved capital from Sian in the west to a new capital at Loyang in North China. See map on 93. (two capitals)

J. Established early forms of feudalism in which the King gave large tracts of land to loyal leaders who became lords. The ceremony for this actually contained the passage of a clump of earth. These lords provided the king

with military forces in exchange for the land. Feudalism was the political/social organization in Medieval Europe.

- K. The use of writing to mark these land transfers was an unprecedented non-religious use of writing. All previous writings had been religious in nature.
 - L. Zhou practiced the “Cult of heaven” a faith based on worship of the Sun, Moon and Stars. At the head of this religious philosophy was the Zhou king. Shang gods had been minimized to feudal lords of the Zhou gods and eventually faded away.
 - M. As was the case in Europe thousands of years later Feudalism’s weaknesses were exposed as the lords gained power. [Click here for information on Feudalism \(European based but still applicable.\)](#)
 - N. Small settlements also grew in power as China was a vacuous space spread out between feudal estates. These developing settlements began warring with each other over land rights. China became a political quagmire due to the countless lords ruling their estate individually, as in Europe Independent kingdoms becoming order of the day.
 - O. Impact? Obviously this had dire impacts on the civilization of China, as the king lost all of his authority in the advent of Zhou administrative feudalism.
 - P. Lords began to gradually pay no attention to these Chinese Kings and used their troops for their own ambition.
 - Q. Major turn of events 771: a Zhou king is killed by a rebellious lord in the West, the Zhou abandoned their Western claims and concentrated solely on their Eastern capital and state. As the Romans did in 330 AD, abandoning the West in favour of Byzantium, split in 476 AD.
 - R. Eventually this leads to the chaos of the Era of Warring States (402-221 BC) the entire political organization of the Zhou dynasty disintegrated. Zhou kings became nothing more than figureheads. Ended in 221 when Qin conquered all of the Zhou states.
- V. Social Change and Cultural Advancement in the Zhou period.
- A. Period of chaos led to massive movements of wealth and talent as Feudal lords altered the landscape of Ancient China.
 - B. Border states really developed during this period, as the talent in China was widespread and moved to the Border States.
 - C. Great period of Philosophy that was responsible for the development of the modern Chinese state.
 - D. Cities flourished
 - E. Roads
 - F. Canals
 - G. Trade
 - H. Currency
 - I. Massive urbanization a key to the transformation of China to an advanced state.
 - J. Economics led to unification between urban and rural areas.
 - K. Iron and its uses, cast iron weapons.
 - L. Iron tools, huge efficiency developments in farming.
- VI. Chinese Culture:
- A. Arose during the late chaos years of the Zhou
 - B. These thinkers unlike Zoroaster, Buddha, and the Hindu clerics were more religious than secular; the Chinese philosophers were secular in nature.

Dealing with the basic questions of how people could live the happiest most productive lives.

- C. Key area: Political development, they sought universal rules for social and political conduct as well as the economic problems that go with it.
- D. Branches of Thought: Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.

VII. Confucianism

- A. Most significant.
- B. Work of the Axis age thinker Kung Fuci, or Confucius.
- C. A teacher who didn't write things down, much like Plato in Greece.
- D. Students composed his thoughts in Analects.
- E. Born a poor aristocrat, he was educated so he could take place in civil service.
- F. Achieved fame as a teacher, taught the sons of nobles, served as a minor official, considered himself a failure for to achieve high office.
- G. Centered on the duties and proper behavior of those in society (see excerpts.)
- H. Interested in Order and stability than theology or religious matters.
- I. He was not an original thinker, but synthesized those ideas already around him.
- J. Great importance on family.
- K. Male superior to female, husband to wife, elder to younger, etc...
- L. If you had order in the family you would have order in society.
- M. Status of gentleman, education, culture, and integrity.
- N. Birth did not make a gentleman and contributor to society.
- O. Successful people were born not made.
- P. Key to political stability and order in society.

VIII. Daoism:

- A. Followers of Lao Zi: supposed Axis age thinker, his life is a mystery.
- B. Author of Dao De Ching
- C. Argued that political authority cannot bestow peace and order if it restricts itself to the rules and customs of society.
- D. Way of Nature
- E. Happiness could come only if they abandoned the word and reverted to nature live simply and alone...like Hermits? In a sense.
- F. Governments could do most by doing as little as possible, early Republican philosophy of small government.
- G. Taxes=unhappiness and resistance.
- H. See 99 for description.
- I. Uneducated and material satisfaction =peace and happiness!
- J. Popular amongst government officials.
- K. Daoism for popular affairs, Confucianism for serious affairs.

IX. Legalism:

- A. Political theories that arose during the Zhou period.
- B. Founders Li Su and Han Fei Zi
- C. Pragmatic realists who thought that the state should possess as much power as possible and extend it relentlessly.
- D. Authoritarians

- E. Dissent and intellectualism need to be rooted out and dealt with.
- F. Opposing ideas dismissed as foolish.

X. I **Ching**, Ying and Yang

- A. I Ching: directs readers how to lead an ethical life and how to live in harmony with the universe.
- B. Oracles read with probability of tossed coins.
- C. Yin and Yang the opposites in nature, living in harmony in a cosmic process.
Yang: strong dry, manly presence. Yin, weak, dark, and womanly.
 - i. Work together to bring about a changeable but predictable relation of power in the world, related to the four seasons. Yin autumn and winter, Yang, Spring and Summer.
 - ii. Complementary can't exist alone.
 - iii. Designed to encourage participation in the cosmic process.

XI. Age of Empire: **Qin**

- A. Shi Huang Ti: the First Emperor. Only lasted fifteen years but their work lasted for centuries.
- B. Unified under a central government and the Han who followed maintained their policies. E. State building required a dominant centralized state. Li Su a legalist founder was his prime minister.
- F. An autocrat with absolute power, amongst the most powerful men ever. First act: dismantle nobility make all of them appear before him at his court. Transported to Xianyang the capital of the Qin (Chin). Instituted a federalist state with provinces, states, districts etc...
- G. Governors were carefully selected and infinitely loyal, hereditary not a factor, amongst their main jobs-military draft and public works projects like **the Great Wall of China**.
- H. Ordered a census for organization and taxation.
- I. Communications expanded, standardized writing, created a unified weights and measures, a universal currency, even unified axle lengths on wagons...talk about centralization.
- J. Great road systems and irrigation projects as well as the expansion of silk.
- K. In facing constant peril from the Northern kingdoms and villages the Qin responded with the Great Wall.
- L. Shi Haung Ti was very unpopular because of his legalist tactics and hatred of Confucians. Books and followers alike were burned.
- M. Oppressive tactics lead to the downfall of the Qin and their "monstrous" leader. His death brought massive revolts and conquest resulting in the creation of the Han State by Liu Bang a minor Qin official in 206 BC.

XII. The Glory of the **Han Dynasty**:

- A. Beginning of the Early Imperial Age
- B. "Men of Han" the name of Chinese
- C. Economic expansion, changing relationships with the people of the steppes, strengthening of the palace at the expense of the civil service, weakening of the state's hold on the peasantry, and the rise of the families of the rich and the gentry were all factors that led to the adoption of Confucian ideals into government and society.

- D. Under this new form of Legalism and Confucianism, rewards and punishments were still used for common people. However, the administrators were judged based on Confucian principles with the justification for these different sets of standards, as they were educated. As a last resort, the ruler could use punishment for both the people and the officials. It was believed that force alone was not a sufficient way to rule and so the emperor needed the help of the Confucians to guide him morally. Evidence of rulers using their power to punish is found in the records of officials who were beheaded.
- E. Liu Bang continued Qin administration, although relaxed so his role as a revolutionary is disputed.
- F. Basis of the empire the hard working numerous peasants.
- G. Huns in the North were dealt with via bribes creating turmoil in the region.
- H. Hans under Hand Wu Ti, drove the Huns north in a legendary 14 year siege into Turkestan. The results were opened relations with India and conquest into Korea, which resulted in trade with Japan. By 111 Vietnam had been conquered.
- I. Han's conquests opened up dramatic increases in their global trade.
- J. Vietnam became an economic trading paradise between the two empires of India and Vietnam.
- K. Chinese/Indian relations improving dramatically
- L. Conquest leads to peace and prosperity never seen before on this scale in China.
- M. In addition, the Han saved the works of Confucians past and promoted growth of intellectualism in China during this period. Scholars of the day put their own spin on the Confucianism thoughts. It had enjoyed a renaissance that has left Confucianism
- N. Expanded Mandate from Heaven into divine approval of the dynasty.
- O. To rule any dynasty needed this gift of Heaven. Which was considered a deity.
- P. The Emperor was the intermediary between his subjects an heaven according to Han Confucianism.
- Q. Confucianism explained history by looking at the virtues and vices of individuals especially emperors and dynasties.
- R. Daoism under Huang Lao also made a considerable impact on Chinese Thinking. Huang Lao held rulers to strict codes of duty and conduct, it expected rulers to serve the people and to keep a minimum their own material possessions and governmental expenditures. They were held to the same legal standards as all citizens. In other words they must follow the way of Dao.
- S. Chinese were amongst the first to study history in a broader sense, similar to Greeks. Greatest Sima Qian, studied dynasties.
- T. Jing Jhi, Chinese Hippocrates medical philosopher.
- U. Ban Zaho: first female philosopher.
- V. Hua Duo: first "pharmacist".
- W. Zang Heng: mathematician tested theories, determined world was round.
- XIII. Daily Life during the Han:
 - A. We know much because of the writings of the upper levels of their society.
 - B. Commoners taken for granted, evident in the writing. Farmer's backbone of society.

- C. Agriculture considered honorable and noble.
- D. Small families (4-5) extended very important, men spent time away in service of emperor every year.
- E. Peasants revolted in the face of harsh rule. Their peace made the Han proud of their achievements.
- F. Rice in south staple, Wheat in North. Some grew mulberry, or bamboo to gain wealth and supplement staple crops. Tea and Sugar were raised in south they were luxury items.
- G. Manure and crushed bones the fertilizer. Most animals not on farms, this meant farming was done by hand.
- H. Plows most important tool. Han introduced very effective plow. Used hammers to ground and mill grain.
- I. Used waterpower to drive their plows, a major innovation.
- J. See Agricultural Calendar page 108.
- K. Archery a need for farmers?
- L. Urban life understandably much different, more lavish splendid homes.
- M. All aspects of life were different see 109 for differences.
- N. Violent culture with animal fights to entertain later developed board games.
- O. Crime a major problem with gangs of bandits looting the cities and countryside.
- P. Vigilante groups arose to combat crime. Poor had no access to Justice in Ancient China.
- Q. Key inventions: paper, writing, excellent metal workers, established state run iron factories, first of their kind (5th AD)
- R. Merchants responsible for distribution, treated like they were in Hebrew societies lowly due to their lack of creativity and skill. Farmers honourable because they worked to conquer the land. Merchants were regulated and were forced to barter in common areas by group.
- S. Markets were a grand place with something for everyone.
- T. Goods and their transportation was difficult with primitive roads but the Han developed several new types of carts, wagons and horse harnesses to speed up the efficiency of commerce. Europe won't catch this break until the high Middle Ages, a lot of strangled horses was the result.
- U. Water transport a huge concept Chinese took full advantage of the Rivers at their disposal.

XIV. The Fall of the Han

- A. Wars on the frontiers and the cost of huge building projects like the Great Wall proved too much for the rural farmers of this magnificent society. The emperor's strain on the Peasants and Soldiers was too much for them to deal with.
- B. Landlords and the pull of feudalism again reared its ugly head as the Priestly class of Amon Re continued to plague Egyptian pharaohs, the lords of China plagued their kings.
- C. Slavery, and economic bondage to this class was the result.
- D. Wang Man tried to reverse these trends by creating a socialist society against the private lords and land speculators. Set about land limits and redistributed land amongst the peasants, unfortunately his actions were little too late and he was killed in a an uprising by the very people he aimed to protect.

- E. Disorder, intrigue and assassination at court plagued Han Kuang Wu after he re-established the Later Han Dynasty and defeated the rebels. A new rivalry between the long oppressed scholars and the men overseeing the harem allowed the imperial lords to gain control of China. This Eunuch overthrew the Han in 221 AD.
- F. Period to follow known as th Three Kingdoms Era during which the empire was divided up into three kingdoms based upon the river systems.
- G. Suffered catastrophic invasions from the North particularly the Toba dynasty from Mongolia, as other invaders did in Mesopotamia the Toba realized the superiority of Chinese culture and adopted their ways of language, politics, culture and dress. Agricultural and scientific advancements absorbed. China was able to assimilate her invaders as opposed to the other way around.