Chapter 2

Classical Civilization: China
(1000 B.C.E. – 500 C.E.)
The Geography of Ancient China

- China was the most isolated of the civilizations studied thus far.
- Long distances and physical barriers separated China from Egypt, the Middle East, and India.
- Isolation contributed to the Chinese belief that China was the center of the earth and the only civilization.
- As in Egypt and Mesopotamia, Chinese civilization began in a river valley, the Huang He.
## Chinese Civilization Develops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shang Dynasty</th>
<th>Zhou Dynasty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1650 B.C.–1027 B.C.)</td>
<td>(1027 B.C.–256 B.C.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gained control of corner of northern China along Huang He.</td>
<td>Overthrew the Shang.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drove off nomads from northern steppes and deserts.</td>
<td>Promoted idea of Mandate of Heaven.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Held complex religious beliefs.</td>
<td>Set up feudal state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed written language used by all Chinese people.</td>
<td>Economy and commerce grew.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Population increased.</td>
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Shang Dynasty

Zhou Dynasty
The Zhou Dynastic Cycle in China

- The Mandate of Heaven, also called the dynastic cycle, explained the rise and fall of the many dynasties that came to rule China.

**The New Dynasty**
- Restores peace
- Appoints loyal officials
- Redistributes land to peasants
- Builds canals, irrigation systems, and roads
- Repairs defensive walls

**The Aging Dynasty**
- Neglects government duties
- Ignores corrupt officials
- Loses control of the provinces
- Imposes heavy taxes to pay for luxuries
- Allows defensive walls to decay

**Problems**
- Floods, famine, earthquakes
- Invasions
- Armed bandits in the provinces
- Peasant revolts

**The Dynastic Cycle in China**
- New dynasty claims the Mandate of Heaven
- Aging dynasty loses the Mandate of Heaven
Shang Religious Beliefs

- In Shang times, Chinese developed a complex religious system in which they prayed to many gods.

- Shang Di was the mother goddess who brought plants and animals to Earth.

- The emperor was the intermediary to the gods.

- Later, Chinese religion centered around the veneration of ancestors and maintaining the balance of two forces, yin and yang.

- Yin was linked to Earth, darkness, and female forces.

- Yang stood for Heaven, light, and male forces.
Shang Achievements

- During the Shang and Zhou periods, the Chinese made great strides in astronomy.
- They developed a complex system of writing.
- The **oracle bones** were a way of communicating with the ancestors.
- Chinese writing was based on pictographs and ideographs.
- Scholars turned calligraphy into an elegant art form.
Cultural Achievements

The Chinese made progress in many areas during the Shang and Zhou periods.

- Discovered how to make silk thread. Silk became China’s most valuable export. Trade route to the Middle East became known as Silk Road.
- Made the first books from wood or bamboo.
- Studied the movement of planets and recorded eclipses of the sun.
- Developed accurate calendar with 365 1/4 days.
- Made remarkable achievements in the art of bronze-making.
The Period of the Warring States

- The Zhou alliances began to fall apart as larger states began to invade and conquer less powerful states.
- Seven major families rose to the forefront.
- The discovery of iron increased agricultural production leading to a rise in population.
- Small armies led by aristocracy gave way to huge, conscript armies led by professional soldiers.
Chinese Government and Advances

- Shi Huangdi united China and built a strong authoritarian government, which laid the groundwork for China’s classical age.
- Under Han rulers, the Chinese made huge advances in trade, government, technology, and the arts.
- The Silk Road was a trade route that linked China with the West.
How did Shi Huangdi Unite China?

- He replaced feudal states with military districts governed by loyal officials.
- He sent spies to report on local officials.
- He forced noble families to live in his capital so he could monitor them.
- He jailed, tortured, and killed those who opposed his rule.
- He had all books of philosophy and literature burned.
- He standardized weights and measures.
- He created uniformity in Chinese writing.
- He strengthened the transportation system.
- He ordered the building of the Great Wall.
Map of the Qin Dynasty

Qin Imperial Palace
Emperor Shi Huangdi

- Though his methods were brutal, Shi Huangdi ushered in China’s classical age.

- This period is called a classical civilization because it set patterns in government, philosophy, religion, science, and the arts that served as the framework for later cultures.
Tomb of Shi Huangdi

The First Emperor’s Terra Cotta Soldiers
Han Rulers Strengthen the Economy and Government in China

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<tr>
<th>ECONOMY</th>
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<tr>
<td>They improved canals and roads.</td>
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<td>They set up granaries across the empire.</td>
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<td>They reorganized finances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They imposed a government <strong>monopoly</strong> on iron and salt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They opened up the <strong>Silk Road</strong>, a trade route linking China and the West.</td>
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<th>GOVERNMENT</th>
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<td>They made Confucianism the official belief of the state.</td>
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<td>They relied on well-educated scholars to run the government.</td>
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<td>They used a civil service exam to find the most qualified officials.</td>
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The Han Golden Age

Han China made such tremendous advances in so many fields, that the Chinese later called themselves “the people of Han.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCIENCE</th>
<th>MEDICINE</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Wrote texts on chemistry,</td>
<td>• Diagnosed diseases.</td>
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<tr>
<td>zoology, and botany.</td>
<td>• Used herbal remedies and other drugs for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Measured movements of stars</td>
<td>treatments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and planets.</td>
<td>• Developed anesthetics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Invented seismograph to</td>
<td>• Explored uses of acupuncture.</td>
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<td>measure earthquakes.</td>
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<tr>
<th>TECHNOLOGY</th>
<th>THE ARTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Made paper out of wood pulp.</td>
<td>• Built grand temples and palaces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pioneered advanced methods</td>
<td>• Produced jade and ivory carvings and ceramic</td>
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<tr>
<td>of shipbuilding.</td>
<td>figures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Invented the rudder, fishing</td>
<td>• Improved bronze-working and silk-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reels, wheelbarrows, and</td>
<td>techniques.</td>
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<td>suspension bridges.</td>
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The Later Han Dynasty and Decline

- The Han depended on **taxation** to maintain control over their territories.
- The wealthy began to find ways to avoid paying taxes, so the burden fell to the merchants and peasants.
- **By 22 B.C. revolts** broke out all over the country.
- Wang Mang, serving as regent for the infant emperor, tried to reform the country by confiscating land from the wealthy and distributing it to the peasants.
- **Floods** destroyed irrigation systems.
- Widespread **famine** lead to further revolts in the south.
- In reaction the “Later Han” government strengthened their control on the population and economy.
- Like the earlier Han dynasties, though, the wealthy stopped paying taxes, the **economy declined**, the **peasants revolted**, and the Han dynasty fell in 220 A.D.
- Empire fractures into “Three Kingdoms” and “Six Dynasties.”
Chinese Philosophies

Three philosophies dominated Classical Chinese Society:

- **The teachings of Confucius**, called **Confucianism**, tried to restore order after the Period of Warring States.
  
  "Lead the people by laws and regulate them by punishments, and the people will simply try to keep out of jail, but will have no sense of shame. Lead the people by virtue . . . And they will have a sense of shame and moreover will become good."

- Legalism grew out of the teachings of Hanfeizi.
  
  "... the nature of man is evil. His goodness is acquired."

- **Daoism** was founded by Laozi, or "Old Master," who wrote *The Way of Virtue*. Dao means "the way."
  
  "Those who know the Dao do not speak of it. Those who speak of it do not know it."
Teachings of Confucius

Confucius developed a philosophy, or system of ideas, that was concerned with world goals, especially how to ensure social order and good government. His ideas included:

- Harmony results when people accept their place in society.

- Everyone has duties and responsibilities. **Filial piety**, or respect for parents, is the most important duty.

- A ruler has the responsibility to provide good government. In return, the people would be respectful and loyal subjects.

- Government leaders and officials should be well educated.
## Legalism vs. Daoism

Legalism and Daoism promoted very different views of government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEGALISM</th>
<th>DAOISM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taught that humans are naturally evil</td>
<td>Taught that people should turn to nature and give up their worldly concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The only way to achieve order is to pass strict laws and impose harsh punishments on lawbreakers.</td>
<td>Government is unnatural &amp; is the cause of many problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ruler alone possesses power.</td>
<td>The best government is the one that governs the least.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Buddhism in China

Buddhism became popular among the Chinese, especially in times of crisis. It was appealing because it

- promised an escape from suffering.
- offered hope of eternal happiness.
- presented Buddha as a compassionate, merciful god.
- taught that anyone could gain salvation through prayer, good works, and devotion.