

Ancient Chinese History
AP World History

- I. Geographical Boundaries and Challenges:
- A. Himalayas and Pamirs to the West
 - B. North: Gobi Desert and Mongolian Plateau
 - C. South Jungle regions.
 - D. Link to West through NW Corridor.
 - E. River Civilization based on the Yellow in the North and the Yangtze in the South.
 - i. Presence of Loess: a fine-grained yellow silt that is very fertile. Yellow river the first of the civilizations.
 - ii. Yellow river similar to the Tigris in its violent ways.
 - iii. Has been referred to as China's Sorrow.
 - iv. Yangtze also farmed since Ancient/Neolithic times. However these people cannot be called Chinese in the way that we define Chinese.
 - v. As in other areas dominated by migrations and movements resulting in Chinese culture.
 - F. Farming areas: Dry Farming such as wheat, grain in Yellow region. Yangtze the farming is wet based mainly Rice.
 - G. Xi river forms China's southern border.
 - H. China is a mountainous semi desert land outside of the river valleys that could not sustain its population without the rivers.
- II. The Shang Dynasty: (1523-1027 BC)
- A. Arose at roughly the same time as the Indo-Aryan invaders assumed control of India.
 - B. Shang's were indigenous.
 - C. Based upon the Neolithic agricultural units in China.
 - D. China is unique in that its growth occurred from exclusively inward procedures. Cultural diffusion...not a great factor.
 - E. No invasions, etc...difficult to get to.
 - F. Shang bring a long period of peaceful rule to this region.
 - G. Much of what we know about the Shang comes from their writings.
 - H. Excavations at Anyang (capital of Shang) and Zhengzhou have shed great light on their leadership and society.
 - I. 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

- K. Had Silkworm capabilities understood its significance?
- 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 was 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.
- O. The size and scope of Shang rule:



- 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.

- IV. 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 Northwestern 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 to great levels, expanding the Empire to boundaries beyond the Shang. Consider the following map.



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 favor 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.
- C. See description on 101.
- D. Size:



- 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. See map.



- 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 honorable because they worked to conquer the land. Merchants were regulated and were forced to barter in common areas by grup.
- 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 agin 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 ionto three kingdoms based upon the river systems. See 4.2.

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.