

Classical China

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THE UNIFICATION OF CHINA

Confucius

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- Kong Fuzi (551-479 BCE)
 - *Master Philosopher Kong*
- Aristocratic roots
- Unwilling to compromise principle
- Decade of unemployment, wandering
- Returned home a failure, died soon thereafter
- Teachings: *Analects*

Confucian Ideas

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- Ethics and politics
 - Avoided religion, metaphysics
- *Junzi*: “superior individuals”
 - Role in government service
- Emphasis on Zhou Dynasty texts
 - later formed core texts of Chinese education

Confucian Values

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- *Ren*
 - kindness, benevolence
- *Li*
 - Propriety
- *Xiao*
 - Filial piety
- Traits lead to development of *junzi*
 - Ideal leaders

Mencius (372-289 BCE)

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- Principal Confucian scholar
- Optimist, belief in power of *ren*
- Not influential during lifetime
 - Considered prime exponent of Confucian thought since 10th century

Xunzi (298-238 BCE)

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- Career as government administrator
- Belief in fundamental selfishness of humanity
 - Compare with Mencius
- Emphasis on *li*, rigid propriety
- discipline

Daoism

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- Critics of Confucianism
 - Passivism, rejection of active attempts to change the course of events
- Founder: Laozi, 6th c. BCE
- The *Daodejing* (Classic of Way and of Virtue)
- *Zhuangzi* (named for author, 369-236 BCE)

The Dao

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- “The Way” (of nature, of the cosmos)
 - Water: soft and yielding, but capable of eroding rock
 - Cavity of pots, wheels: nonexistent, but essential

Doctrine of Wuwei

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- Attempt to control universe results in chaos
- Restore order by disengagement
 - No advanced education
 - No ambition
- Simple living in harmony with nature
- Cultivate self-knowledge

Political Implications of Daoism

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- Confucianism as public doctrine
- Daoism as private pursuit
- Ironic combination allowed intellectuals to pursue both

Legalism

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- Emphasis on development of the state
 - Ruthless, end justifies the means
- Role of Law
 - Strict punishment for violators
 - Principle of collective responsibility
- Shang Yang (390-338 BCE), *The Book of the Lord Shang*
- Han Feizi (280-233 BCE)
 - Forced to commit suicide by political enemies

Legalist Doctrine

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- Two strengths of the state
 - Agriculture
 - Military
- Emphasized development of peasant, soldier classes
- Distrust of pure intellectual, cultural pursuits
- Historically, often imitated but rarely praised

Unification of China

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- Qin dynasty develops, 4th-3rd centuries BCE
- Generous land grants under Shang Yang
 - Private farmers decrease power of large landholders
 - Increasing centralization of power
- Improved military technology

The First Emperor

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- Qin Shihuangdi (r. 221-210 BCE) founds new dynasty as “First Emperor”
- Dynasty ends in 207, but sets dramatic precedent
- Basis of rule: centralized bureaucracy
- Massive public works begun
 - Incl. precursor to Great Wall

China under the Qin dynasty, 221-207 B.C.E.

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Resistance to Qin Policies

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- Emperor orders execution of all critics
- Orders burning of all ideological works
- Some 460 scholars buried alive
- Others exiled
- Massive cultural losses

Qin Centralization

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- **Standardized:**
 - Laws
 - Currencies
 - Weights and measures
 - Script
 - ✦ Previously: single language written in distinct scripts
- **Building of roads, bridges**

Massive Tomb Projects

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- Built by 700,000 workers
- Slaves, concubines, and craftsmen sacrificed and buried
- Excavated in 1974, 15,000 terra cotta soldiers unearthed

Tomb of the First Emperor

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Terracotta warriors from the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi

The Han Dynasty

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- Civil disorder brings down Qin dynasty 207 BCE
- Liu Bang forms new dynasty: the Han (206 BCE-220 CE)
 - Former Han (206 BCE-9 CE)
 - Interruption 9-23 CE
 - Later Han (25-220 CE)

Early Han Policies

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- Relaxed Qin tyranny without returning to Zhou anarchy
- Created large landholdings
- But maintained control over administrative regions
- After failed rebellion, took more central control

Han Centralization

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- The Martial Emperor: Han Wudi (141-87 BCE)
- Increased taxes to fund more public works
- But huge demand for government officials, decline since Qin persecution

Confucian Educational System

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- Han Wudi establishes an Imperial University in 124 BCE
- Not a lover of scholarship, but demanded educated class for bureaucracy
- Adopted Confucianism as official course of study
- 3000 students by end of Former Han, 30,000 by end of Later Han

Han Imperial Expansion

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- Invasions of Vietnam, Korea
- Constant attacks from Xiongnu
 - Nomads from Central Asia
 - Horsemen
 - Brutal: Maodun (210-174 BCE), had soldiers murder his wife, father
- Han Wudi briefly dominates Xiongnu

East Asia and central Asia at the time of Han Wudi, Ca. 87 B.C.E.

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Patriarchal Social Order

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- *Classic of Filial Piety*
 - Subordination to elder males
- *Admonitions for Women*
 - Female virtues:
 - ✦ Humility, obedience, subservience, loyalty

Iron Metallurgy

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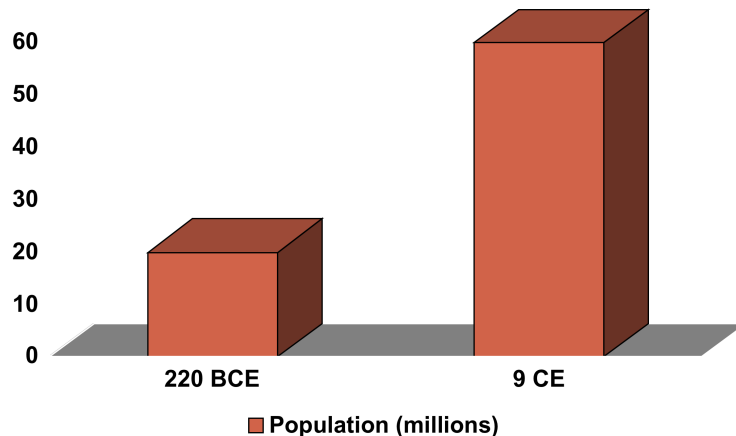
- Expansion of iron manufacture
 - Iron tips on tools abandoned as tools entirely made from iron
- Increased food production
- Superior weaponry

Other technological Developments

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- **Cultivation of silkworms**
 - Breeding
 - Diet control
 - ✦ Other silk-producing lands relied on wild worms
- **Development of paper**
 - Bamboo, fabric abandoned in favor of wood and textile-based paper

Population Growth in the Han Dynasty



- General prosperity
- Increased agricultural productivity
- Taxes small part of overall income
- Produce occasionally spoiling in state granaries

Economic and Social Difficulties

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- Expenses of military expeditions, esp. vs. Xiongnu
- Taxes increasing
- Arbitrary property confiscations rise
- Increasing gap between rich and poor
 - Slavery, tenant farming increase
 - Banditry, rebellion

Reign of Wang Mang (9-23 CE)

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- Wang Mang regent for 2-year old Emperor, 6 CE
- Takes power himself 9 CE
- Introduces massive reforms
 - The “socialist emperor”
 - Land redistribution, but poorly handled
- Social chaos ends in his assassination 23 CE

Later Han Dynasty

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- Han Dynasty emperors manage, with difficulty, to reassert control
- Yellow Turban uprising challenges land distribution problems
- Internal court intrigue
- Weakened Han Dynasty collapses by 220 CE