

The Unification of China

chapter 8

AP KEY CONCEPTS

2.1.I: Codifications and further developments of existing religious traditions provided a bond among people and an ethical code to live by.

2.1.II: New belief systems and cultural traditions emerged and spread, often asserting universal truths.

2.1.III: Belief systems generally reinforced existing social structures while also offering new roles and status to some men and women. For example, Confucianism emphasized filial piety, and some Buddhists and Christians practiced a monastic life.

2.2.I: The number and size of key states and empires grew dramatically as rulers imposed political unity on areas where previously there had been competing states.

2.2.II: Empires and states developed new techniques of imperial administration based, in part, on the success of earlier political forms.

2.2.III: Unique social and economic dimensions developed in imperial societies in Afro-Eurasia and the Americas.

2.2.IV: The Roman, Han, Persian, Mauryan, and Gupta empires encountered political, cultural, and administrative difficulties that they could not manage, which eventually led to their decline, collapse, and transformation into successor empires or states.

AP HISTORICAL THINKING

Synthesis Understand how Confucian philosophy could be used to justify patriarchal social structure and a foundation for Chinese political philosophy.

Comparison Compare the government and economy of the Persian empires to the Qin and Han empires.

Causation and Contextualization Understand the internal and external factors that contributed to the collapse of both the Qin and the Han dynasties.

AP CHAPTER FOCUS

The Qin family's win in the Period of Warring States created a unified country for the first time in history. Yet, it was one thing to defeat your opponents and impose rule over them, but entirely different to convince successive generations that your family was entitled to rule. As you read, look for significant ways the rulers of the Qin and Han dynasties used philosophies and beliefs, as well as political and economic policies, to legitimize their rule. Pay particular attention to Confucianism as well as the mandate of heaven.

Not a religion, Confucianism became the dominant belief system in China during the Han dynasty. There are no gods or goddesses, no ceremonies, no temples, and no priests. China is the only major classical empire without a specific social class of priests.

Interregional trade remains a significant continuity within China. The city of Chang'an (sometimes called Xian), located at a strategic bend of the Huang He, functioned as the political, administrative, and economic center of the Han empire, and was the central node of the Silk Roads.

Many important Chinese traditions were established during the Qin and Han dynasties; these dynasties make frequent appearances on the AP exam. You may see questions about the reasons for and the effects of Qin Shihuangdi's massive building and territorial expansion policies, the role of Confucianism, the establishment of the university system, and the role of trade and nomadic peoples. Hold on to the information in this chapter and apply it to the information in chapter 12 to analyze the relationship between the Xiongnu and the collapse of the Han Empire, and how Confucian beliefs spread (sometimes changing) to other regions in Asia.

In Search of Political and Social Order

Confucianism

Daoism

Legalism

The Unification of China

The Qin Dynasty

The Early Han Dynasty

From Economic Prosperity to Social Disorder

Productivity and Prosperity during the Early Han

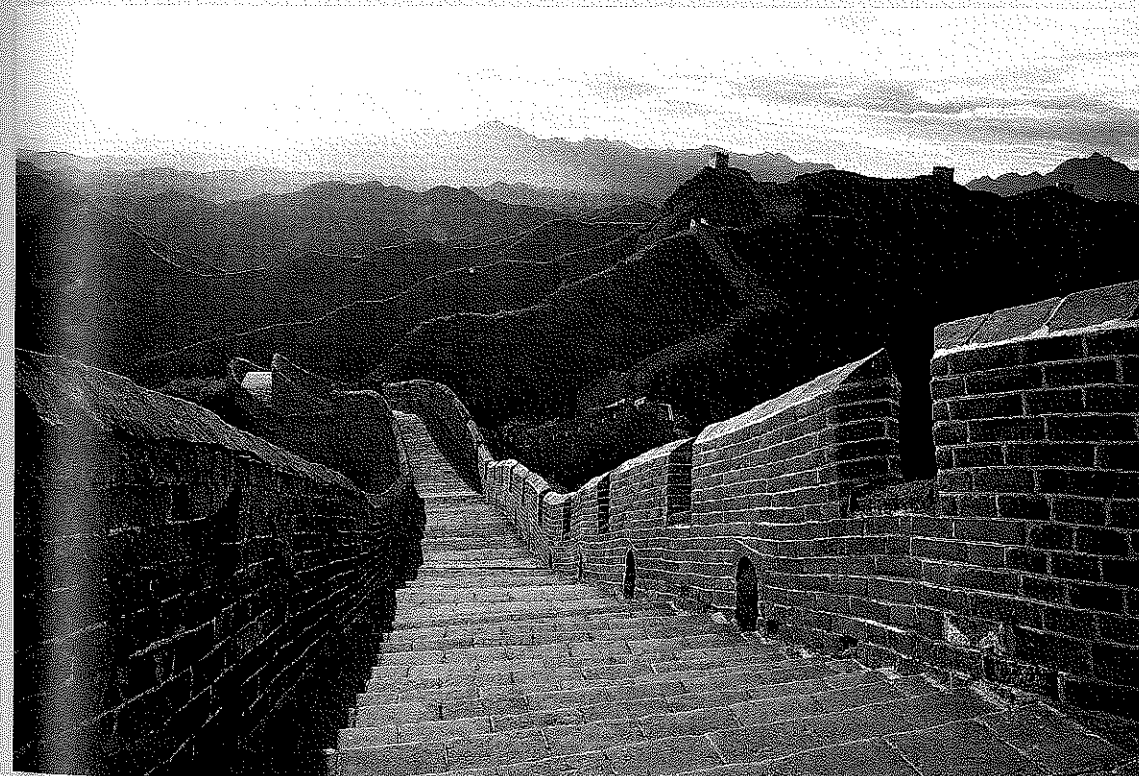
Economic and Social Difficulties

The Later Han Dynasty

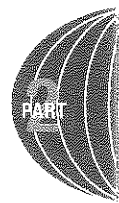
EYEWITNESS:

Sima Qian: Speaking Truth to Power in Han China

In about the year 99 B.C.E., Chinese imperial officials sentenced the historian Sima Qian to punishment by castration. Like his father before him, Sima Qian was the official astrologer and historian at the court of the Han dynasty in Chang'an. For more than a decade, he had worked diligently on a project that he had inherited from his father—a history of China from earliest times to his own day. This project brought Sima Qian high prominence at the imperial court. When he spoke in defense of a dishonored general, his views attracted widespread attention. When the emperor himself learned that Sima Qian had publicly expressed opinions



The Great Wall of China, the first version of which was constructed by the first emperor of the Qin, stretches across the mountains of northern China.



that contradicted his judgment, the emperor reacted furiously and ordered the historian to undergo the humiliating punishment.

Human castration was by no means uncommon in premodern times. Thousands of boys and young men of undistinguished birth underwent voluntary castration in China and many other lands in order to pursue careers as **eunuchs**. Since eunuchs could not sire families and build familial power bases to challenge established authorities, ruling elites often appointed eunuchs, rather than nobles, to sensitive posts. However, as personal servants of ruling elites, eunuchs sometimes came to wield enormous power within a ruling house because of their influence with rulers and their families.

Exemplary punishment was not an appealing alternative, however, to educated elites and other prominent individuals: when sentenced to punitive castration, Chinese men of honor normally avoided the penalty by taking their own lives. Yet Sima Qian chose to endure his punishment. In a letter to a friend, he explained that an early death by suicide would mean that work only he was capable of producing would go forever unwritten. To transmit his understanding of the Chinese past, Sima Qian opted to live and work in disgrace until his death about 90 B.C.E.

During his last years Sima Qian completed a massive work consisting of 130 chapters, most of which survive. He consulted court documents and the historical works of his predecessors, and when writing about his own age he supplemented those sources with personal observations and information gleaned from political and military figures who played leading roles in Chinese society. He composed historical accounts of the emperors' reigns and biographical sketches of notable figures, including ministers, statesmen, generals, empresses, aristocrats, scholars, officials, merchants, and rebels. He even described the societies of neighboring peoples with whom the Chinese sometimes conducted trade and sometimes made war. The work of the disgraced but conscientious scholar Sima Qian provides the best information available about the development of early imperial China.

A rich body of political and social thought prepared the way for the unification of China under the Qin and Han dynasties. Confucians, Daoists, Legalists, and others formed schools of thought and worked to bring political and social stability to China during the chaotic years of the late Zhou dynasty and the Period of the Warring States, and profoundly influenced Chinese political and cultural traditions.

IN SEARCH OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORDER

The late centuries of the Zhou dynasty brought political confusion to China and led eventually to the chaos associated with the **Period of the Warring States** (403–221 B.C.E.). During those same centuries, however, there also took place a remarkable cultural flowering that left a permanent mark on Chinese history. In a way, political turmoil helps to explain the cultural creativity of the late Zhou dynasty and the Period of the Warring States because it forced thoughtful people to reflect on the nature of society and the proper roles of human beings in society. Some sought to identify principles that would restore political and social order. Others concerned themselves with a search for individual tranquility apart from society. Three schools of thought that emerged during those

centuries of confusion and chaos—**Confucianism**, **Daoism**, and **Legalism**—exercised a particularly deep influence on Chinese political and cultural traditions.

Confucianism

Confucius The first Chinese thinker who addressed the problem of political and social order in a straightforward and self-conscious way was **Kong Fuzi** (551–479 B.C.E.)—“Master Philosopher Kong,” as his disciples called him, or Confucius, as he is known in English. He came from an aristocratic family in the state of Lu in northern China, and for many years he sought an influential post at the Lu court. But Confucius was a strong-willed man who often did not get along well with others. He could be quite cantankerous: he was known to lodge bitter complaints, for example, if someone undercooked or overcooked his rice. Not surprisingly, then, he refused to compromise his beliefs in the interest of political expediency, and he insisted on observing principles that frequently clashed with state policy. When he realized that he would never obtain anything more than a minor post in Lu, Confucius left in search of a more prestigious appointment elsewhere. For about ten years he traveled to courts throughout northern China, but

he found none willing to accept his services. In 484 B.C.E., bitterly disappointed, he returned to Lu, where he died five years later.

Confucian Ideas Confucius never realized his ambition to become a powerful minister. Throughout his career, however, he served as an educator as well as a political advisor, and in that capacity he left an enduring mark on Chinese society. He attracted numerous disciples who aspired to political careers. Some of his pupils compiled the master's sayings and teachings in a book known as the *Analects*, a work that has profoundly influenced Chinese political and cultural traditions.

Confucius's thought was fundamentally moral, ethical, and political in character. It was also thoroughly practical: Confucius did not address abstruse philosophical questions, because he thought they would not help to solve the political and social problems of his day. Nor did he deal with religious questions, because he thought they went beyond the capacity of mortal human intelligence. He did not even concern himself much with the structure of the state, because he thought political and social harmony arose from the proper ordering of human relationships rather than the establishment of state offices. In an age when bureaucratic institutions were not yet well developed, Confucius believed that the best way to promote good government was to fill official positions with individuals who were both well educated and extraordinarily conscientious. Thus Confucius concentrated on the formation of what he called *junzi*—“superior individuals”—who took a broad view of public affairs and did not allow personal interests to influence their judgments.

In the absence of an established educational system and a formal curriculum, Confucius had his disciples study works of poetry and history produced during the Zhou dynasty, since he believed that they provided excellent insight into human nature. He carefully examined the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Rites*, and other works with his students, concentrating especially on their practical value for prospective administrators. As a result of Confucius's



No contemporary portrait of Confucius survives, but artists have used their imaginations and depicted him in many ways over the years. This portrait of 1735 identifies Confucius as “the Sage and Teacher” and represents him in the distinctive dress of an eighteenth-century Confucian scholar-bureaucrat.

influence, literary works of the Zhou dynasty became the core texts of the traditional Chinese education. For more than two thousand years, until the early twentieth century C.E., talented Chinese seeking government posts proceeded through a cycle of studies deriving from the one developed by Confucius in the fifth century B.C.E.

For Confucius, though, an advanced education represented only a part of the preparation needed by the ideal government official. More important than formal learning was the possession of a strong sense of moral integrity and a capacity to deliver wise and fair judgments. Thus Confucius encouraged his students to cultivate high ethical standards and to hone their faculties of analysis and judgment.

Confucian Values Confucius emphasized several qualities in particular. One of them he called *ren*, by which he meant an attitude of kindness and benevolence or a sense of humanity. Confucius explained that individuals possessing *ren* were courteous, respectful, diligent, and loyal, and he considered *ren* a characteristic desperately needed in government officials. Another quality of central importance was

li, a sense of propriety, which called for individuals to behave in conventionally appropriate fashion: they should treat all other humans with courtesy, while showing special respect and deference to elders or superiors. Yet another quality that Confucius emphasized was *xiao*, filial piety, which reflected the high significance of the family in Chinese society. The demands of filial piety obliged children to respect their parents and other family elders, look after their welfare, support them in old age, and remember them along with other ancestors after their deaths.

Confucius emphasized personal qualities such as *ren*, *li*, and *xiao* because he believed that individuals who possessed those traits would gain influence in the larger society. Those who disciplined themselves and properly molded their

eunuchs (YOO-nihks)

Zhou (joh)

Qin (chihn)

Confucianism (kuhn-FEW-shuhn-iz'm)

Daoism (DOW-iz'm)

Sources from the Past

Confucius on Good Government

Confucius never composed formal writings, but his disciples collected his often pithy remarks into a work known as the Analects ("sayings"). Referred to as "the Master" in the following excerpts from the Analects, Confucius consistently argued that only good men possessing moral authority could rule effectively.

The Master said, "He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place, while all the stars turn toward it. . . ."

The Master said, "If the people be led by laws, and uniformity be imposed on them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but will have no sense of shame.

"If they be led by virtue, and uniformity be provided for them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good. . . ."

The duke Ai asked, saying, "What should be done in order to secure the submission of the people?" Confucius replied, "Advance the upright and set aside the crooked, and then the people will submit. Advance the crooked and set aside the upright, and then the people will not submit."

Ji Kang asked how to cause the people to reverence their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to seek virtue. The Master said, "Let him preside over them with gravity; then they will reverence him. Let him be filial and kind to all; then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and teach the incompetent; then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous. . . ."

Zigong asked about government. The Master said, "The requisites of government are that there be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler."

characters would not only possess personal self-control but also have the power of leading others by example. Only through enlightened leadership by morally strong individuals, Confucius believed, was there any hope for the restoration of political and social order in China. Thus his goal was not simply the cultivation of personal morality for its own sake but, rather, the creation of *junzi* who could bring order and stability to China.

Because Confucius expressed his thought in general terms, later disciples could adapt it to the particular problems of their times. Indeed, the flexibility of Confucian thought helps to account for its remarkable longevity and influence in China. Two later disciples of Confucius—**Mencius** and

Mencius (MEN-shi-us)

Xunzi (SHOON-dzuh)

Zigong said, "If it cannot be helped, and one of these must be dispensed with, which of the three should be foregone first?" "The military equipment," said the Master.

Zigong again asked, "If it cannot be helped, and one of the remaining two must be dispensed with, which of them should be foregone?" The Master answered, "Part with the food. From olden times, death has been the lot of all men; but if the people have no faith in their rulers, there is no standing for the state. . . ."

Ji Kang asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend when the wind blows across it. . . ."

The Master said, "When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed."

For Further Reflection

- In what ways do the teachings of Confucius seem to provide an alternative to the violence and disorder of the Period of the Warring States?

Source: James Legge, trans. *The Chinese Classics*, 7 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893, 1:145, 146, 152, 254, 258–59, 266. (Translations slightly modified.)

Xunzi—illustrate especially well the ways in which Confucian thought lent itself to elaboration and adaptation.

Mencius Mencius (372–289 B.C.E.) was the most learned man of his age and the principal spokesman for the Confucian school. During the Period of the Warring States, he traveled widely throughout China, consulting with rulers and offering advice on political issues. Mencius firmly believed that human nature was basically good, and he argued for policies that would allow it to influence society as a whole. Thus he placed special emphasis on the Confucian virtue of *ren* and advocated government by benevolence and humanity. This principle implied that rulers would levy light taxes, avoid wars, support education, and encourage harmony and cooperation. Critics charged that Mencius held a naively optimistic view of human nature, arguing that his policies would rarely succeed in the real

world where human interests, wills, and ambitions constantly clash. Indeed, Mencius's advice had little practical effect during his lifetime. Over the long term, however, his ideas deeply influenced the Confucian tradition. Since about the tenth century C.E., many Chinese scholars have considered Mencius the most authoritative of Confucius's early expositors.

Xunzi Like Confucius and Mencius, Xunzi (298–238 B.C.E.) was a man of immense learning, but unlike his predecessors, he also served for many years as a government administrator. His practical experience encouraged him to develop a view of human nature that was less rosy than Mencius's view. Xunzi believed that human beings selfishly pursued their own interests, no matter what effects their actions had on others, and resisted making any contribution voluntarily to the larger society. He considered strong social discipline the best means to bring order to society. Thus, whereas Mencius emphasized the Confucian quality of *ren*, Xunzi emphasized *li*. He advocated the establishment of clear, well-publicized standards of conduct that would set limits on the pursuit of individual interests and punish those who neglected their obligations to the larger society. Xunzi once likened human beings to pieces of warped lumber: just as it was possible to straighten out bad wood, so too it was possible to turn selfish and recalcitrant individuals into useful, contributing members of society. But the process involved harsh social discipline similar to the steam treatments, heat applications, hammering, bending, and forcible wrenching that turned warped wood into useful lumber.

Like Confucius and Mencius, however, Xunzi also believed that it was possible to improve human beings and restore order to society. This fundamental optimism was a basic characteristic of Confucian thought. It explains the high value that Confucian thinkers placed on education and public behavior, and it accounts also for their activist approach to public affairs. Confucians involved themselves in society: they sought government positions and made conscientious efforts to solve political and social problems and to promote harmony in public life. By no means, however, did the Confucians win universal praise for their efforts: to some of their contemporaries, Confucian activism represented little more than mispent energy.

Daoism

The Daoists were the most prominent critics of Confucian activism. Like Confucianism, Daoist thought developed in response to the turbulence of the late Zhou dynasty and the Period of the Warring States. But unlike the Confucians, the Daoists considered it pointless to waste time and energy on problems that defied solution. Instead of Confucian social activism, the Daoists devoted their energies to reflection and introspection, in hopes that they could understand the natural principles that governed the world and could learn how to live

in harmony with them. The Daoists believed that over time, this approach would bring harmony to society as a whole, as people ceased to meddle in affairs that they could not understand or control.

Laozi and the *Daodejing* According to Chinese tradition, the founder of Daoism was a sage named **Laozi** who lived during the sixth century B.C.E. Although there might have been a historical Laozi, it is almost certain that several thinkers contributed to the *Daodejing* (*Classic of the Way and of Virtue*), the basic exposition of Daoist beliefs traditionally ascribed to Laozi, and that the book acquired its definitive form over several centuries. After the *Daodejing*, the most important Daoist work was the *Zhuangzi*, named after its author, the philosopher Zhuangzi (369–286 B.C.E.), who provided a well-reasoned compendium of Daoist views.

The *Dao* Daoism represented an effort to understand the fundamental character of the world and nature. The central concept of Daoism is *dao*, meaning "the way," more specifically "the way of nature" or "the way of the cosmos." *Dao* is an elusive concept, and the Daoists themselves did not generally characterize it in positive and forthright terms. In the *Daodejing*, for example, *dao* figures as the original force of the cosmos, an eternal and unchanging principle that governs all the workings of the world. The *Daodejing* envisioned *dao* as a passive force that acted in perfect harmony with the principles of nature. Thus *dao* resembles water, which is soft and yielding, yet is also so powerful that it eventually erodes even the hardest rock placed in its path. *Dao* also resembles the cavity of a pot or the hub of a wheel: although they are nothing more than empty spaces, they make the pot and the wheel useful tools.

If the principles of *dao* governed the world, it followed that human beings should tailor their behavior to its passive and yielding nature. To the Daoists, living in harmony with *dao* meant retreating from engagement in the world of politics and administration. Ambition and activism had not solved political and social problems. Far from it: human striving had brought the world to a state of chaos. The proper response to that situation was to cease frantic striving and live with a sense of selfless detachment.

The Doctrine of *Wuwei* Thus early Daoists recognized as the chief moral virtue the trait of *wuwei*—disengagement from the competitive exertions and active involvement in affairs of the world. *Wuwei* required that individuals refrain from advanced education (which concentrated on abstruse trivialities) and from personal striving (which indicated excessive concern with the tedious affairs of the world). *Wuwei*

Daodejing (DOW-DAY-JIHNG)

Zhuangzi (joo-wong-dz)

wuwei (woo-WAY)



A jade statue produced about the tenth century C.E. depicts the sage Laozi on an ox. Legends reported that Laozi rode a blue ox from China to central Asia when spreading his teachings. Why would simple dress and transport be appropriate for Laozi?

called instead for individuals to act selflessly and live simply, unpretentiously, and in harmony with nature.

Wuwei also had implications for state and society: the less government, the better. Instead of expansive kingdoms and empires, the *Daodejing* envisioned a world of tiny, self-sufficient communities where people had no desire to conquer their neighbors or to trade with them. Indeed, even when people lived so close to the next community that they could hear the dogs barking and cocks crowing, they would be so content with their existence that they would not even have the desire to visit their neighbors!

Daoists subjected their philosophical rivals to ferocious attacks for dwelling on trivial and superficial issues instead of practicing *wuwei* and living in harmony with nature. Zhuangzi in particular possessed a caustic wit that he deployed effectively in mocking the Confucians and other philosophers for engaging in meaningless debates. Once, for example, he related a fable about a keeper of monkeys who ran low on food for his animals. He advised the monkeys that conditions forced him to cut their rations, so in the future he would bring them only three nuts in the morning and four in the afternoon. When the monkeys exploded in fury, the keeper relented and promised to bring four nuts in the morning and three in the afternoon—a proposal that the monkeys accepted with

Han Feizi (hahn fay-zi)

delight. The philosophers' fierce debates, Zhuangzi implied, were just as insignificant as the uproar over the monkeys' feeding schedule.

Political Implications of Daoism By encouraging the development of a reflective and introspective consciousness, Daoism served as a counterbalance to the activism and extroversion of the Confucian tradition. Indeed, Daoism encouraged the cultivation of self-knowledge in a way that appealed strongly to Confucians as well as to Daoists. Because neither Confucianism nor Daoism was an exclusive faith that precluded observance of the other, it has been possible through the centuries for individuals to study the Confucian curriculum and take administrative posts in the government while devoting their private hours to reflection on human nature and the place of humans in the larger world—to live as Confucians by day, as it were, and Daoists by night.

Legalism

Ultimately, neither Confucian activism nor Daoist retreat was able to solve the problems that plagued China during the Period of the Warring States. Order returned to China only after the emergence of a third school of thought—that of the Legalists—which promoted a practical and ruthlessly efficient approach to statecraft. Unlike the Confucians, the Legalists did not concern themselves with ethics, morality, or propriety. Unlike the Daoists, the Legalists cared nothing about principles governing the world or the place of human beings in nature. Instead, they devoted their attention exclusively to the state, which they sought to strengthen and expand at all costs.

Shang Yang Legalist doctrine emerged from the insights of men who participated actively in Chinese political affairs during the late fourth century B.C.E. Most notable of them was **Shang Yang** (ca. 390–338 B.C.E.), who served as chief minister to the duke of the Qin state in western China. His policies survive in a work titled *The Book of Lord Shang*, which most likely includes contributions from other ministers as well as from Shang Yang himself. Though a clever and efficient administrator, Shang Yang also was despised and feared because of his power and ruthlessness. Upon the death of his patron, the duke of Qin, Shang Yang quickly fell: his enemies at court executed him, mutilated his body, and annihilated his family.

Han Feizi The most systematic of the Legalist theorists was **Han Feizi** (ca. 280–233 B.C.E.), a student of the Confucian scholar Xunzi. Han Feizi carefully reviewed Legalist ideas from political thinkers in all parts of China and synthesized them in a collection of powerful and well-argued essays on statecraft. Like Shang Yang, Han Feizi served as an advisor at the Qin court, and he too fell afoul of other ambitious men, who forced him to end his life by taking poison. The Legalist

Sources from the Past

Laozi on Living in Harmony with *Dao*

Committed Daoists mostly rejected opportunities to play active roles in government. Yet like the Confucians, the Daoists held strong views on virtuous behavior, and their understanding of dao had deep political implications, as exemplified by the following excerpts from the Daodejing.

The highest goodness is like water, for water is excellent in benefitting all things, and it does not strive. It occupies the lowest place, which men abhor. And therefore it is near akin to the *dao*. . . .

In governing men and in serving heaven, there is nothing like moderation. For only by moderation can there be an early return to the normal state of humankind. This early return is the same as a great storage of virtue. With a great storage of virtue there is nothing that may not be achieved. If there is nothing that may not be achieved, then no one will know to what extent this power reaches. And if no one knows to what extent a man's power reaches, that man is fit to be the ruler of a state. Having the secret of rule, his rule shall endure. Setting the tap-root deep, and making the spreading roots firm: this is the way to ensure long life to the tree. . . .

Use uprightness in ruling a state; employ indirect methods in waging war; practice non-interference in order to win the empire. . . .

state itself thus consumed the two foremost exponents of Legalist doctrine.

Legalist Doctrine Shang Yang, Han Feizi, and other Legalists reasoned that the foundations of a state's strength were agriculture and armed forces. Thus Legalists sought to channel as many individuals as possible into cultivation or military service while discouraging them from pursuing careers as merchants, entrepreneurs, scholars, educators, philosophers, poets, or artists, since those lines of work did not directly advance the interests of the state.

The Legalists expected to harness subjects' energy by means of clear and strict laws—hence the name “Legalist.” Their faith in laws distinguished the Legalists clearly from the Confucians, who relied on ritual, custom, education, a sense of propriety, and the humane example of benevolent *junzi* administrators to induce individuals to behave appropriately. The Legalists believed that those influences were not powerful enough to persuade subjects to subordinate their self-interest to the needs of the state. They imposed a strict legal regimen that clearly outlined expectations and provided severe punishment, swiftly administered, for violators. They believed that if people feared to commit small crimes, they would hesitate all the more before committing great crimes.

The greater the number of laws and enactments, the more thieves and robbers there will be. Therefore the Sage [Laozi] says: “So long as I do nothing, the people will work out their own reformation. So long as I love calm, the people will right themselves. If only I keep from meddling, the people will grow rich. If only I am free from desire, the people will come naturally back to simplicity. . . .”

There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, yet for attacking things that are hard and strong, there is nothing that surpasses it, nothing that can take its place.

The soft overcomes the hard; the weak overcomes the strong. There is no one in the world but knows this truth, and no one who can put it into practice.

For Further Reflection

- To what extent did Daoists offer useful or practical political alternatives in the Period of the Warring States?

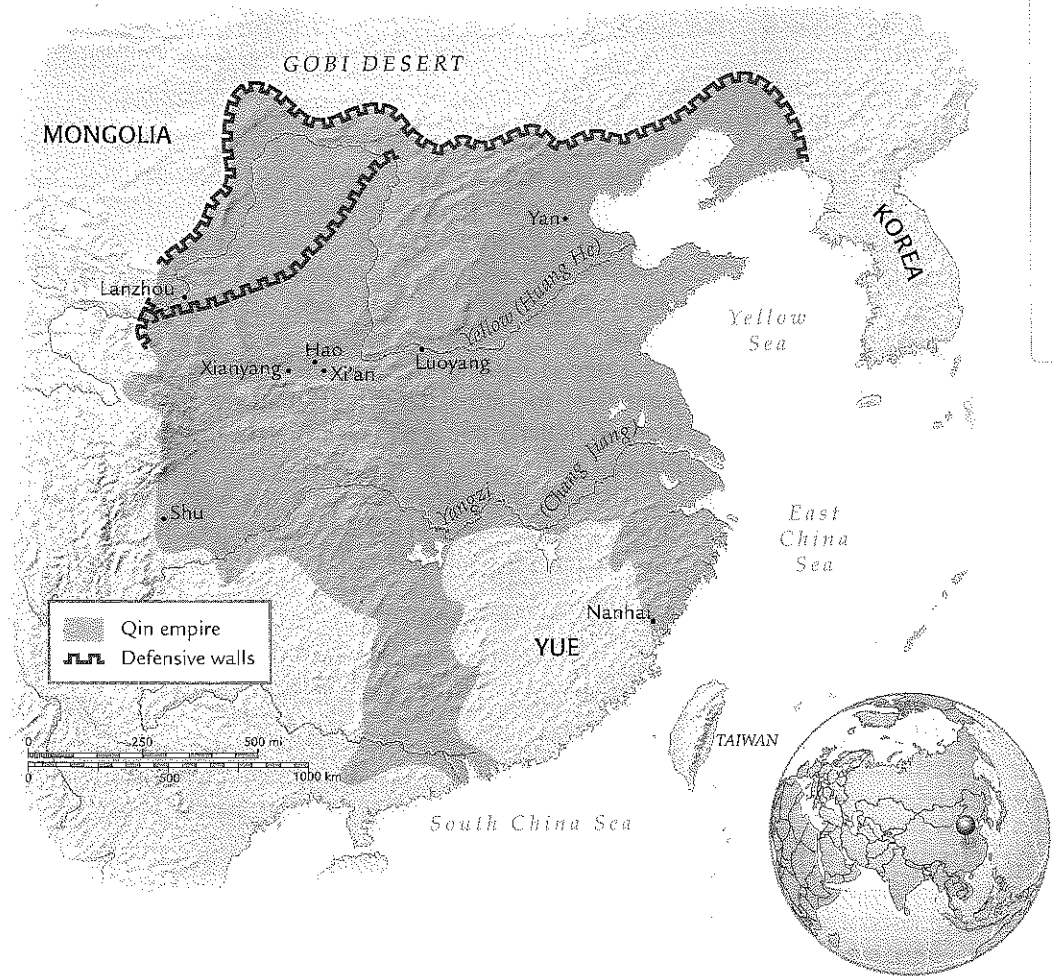
Source: Lionel Giles, trans. *The Sayings of Lao Tzu*. London: John Murray, 1905, pp. 26, 29–30, 41, 50. (Translations slightly modified.)

Thus Legalists imposed harsh penalties even for minor infractions: individuals could suffer amputation of their hands or feet, for example, for disposing of ashes or trash in the street. The Legalists also established the principle of collective responsibility before the law. They expected all members of a family or community to observe the others closely, forestall any illegal activity, and report any infractions. Failing those obligations, all members of a family or community were liable to punishment along with the actual violator.

The Legalists' principles of government did not win them much popularity. Over the course of the centuries, Chinese moral and political philosophers have had little praise for the Legalists, and few have openly associated themselves with the Legalist school. Yet Legalist doctrine lent itself readily to practical application, and Legalist principles of government quickly produced remarkable results for rulers who adopted them. In fact, Legalist methods put an end to the Period of the Warring States and brought about the unification of China.

THE UNIFICATION OF CHINA

During the Period of the Warring States, rulers of several regional states adopted elements of the Legalist program. Legalist doctrines met the most enthusiastic response in the



MAP 8.1

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

Compare the size of Qin territories with those of earlier Chinese kingdoms depicted in Maps 5.1 and 5.2.

How might historians account for the greater reach of the Qin dynasty?

state of Qin, in western China, where Shang Yang and Han Feizi oversaw the implementation of Legalist policies. The Qin state soon dominated its neighbors and imposed centralized imperial rule throughout China. Qin rule survived only for a few years, but the succeeding Han dynasty followed the Qin example by governing China through a centralized imperial administration.

The Qin Dynasty

The Kingdom of Qin During the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., the Qin state underwent a remarkable round of economic, political, and military development. Shang Yang encouraged peasant cultivators to migrate to the sparsely populated state. By granting them private plots and allowing them to enjoy generous profits, his policy dramatically boosted agricultural production. By granting land rights to individual cultivators, his policy also weakened the economic position of the hereditary aristocratic classes. That approach allowed Qin rulers to establish centralized, bureaucratic rule

Qin Shihuangdi (chihn she-huang-dee)

throughout their state. Meanwhile, they devoted the newfound wealth of their state to the organization of a powerful army equipped with the most effective iron weapons available. During the third century B.C.E., the kingdom of Qin gradually but consistently grew at the expense of the other Chinese states. Qin rulers attacked one state after another, absorbing each new conquest into their centralized structure, until finally they had brought China for the first time under the sway of a single state.

The First Emperor In the year 221 B.C.E., the king of Qin proclaimed himself the First Emperor and decreed that his descendants would follow him and reign for thousands of generations. The First Emperor, **Qin Shihuangdi** (reigned 221–210 B.C.E.), could not know that his dynasty would last only fourteen years and in 207 B.C.E. would dissolve because of civil insurrections. Yet the Qin dynasty had a significance out of proportion to its short life. Like the Achaemenid empire in Persia, the Qin dynasty established a tradition of centralized imperial rule that provided large-scale political organization over the long term of Chinese history.



A life-size model of an infantryman suggests the discipline that drove the armies of Qin Shihuangdi, the self-proclaimed First Emperor of China.

Like his ancestors in the kingdom of Qin, the First Emperor of China ignored the nobility and ruled his empire through a centralized bureaucracy. He governed from his capital at **Xianyang**, near the early Zhou capital of Hao and the modern city of Xi'an. The remainder of China he divided into administrative provinces and districts, and he entrusted the communication and implementation of his policies to officers of the central government who served at the pleasure of the emperor himself. He disarmed regional military forces and destroyed fortresses that might serve as points of rebellion or resistance. He built roads to facilitate communications and the movement of armies: his network of roads extended more than 6,800 kilometers (4,000 miles). He also drafted laborers by the hundreds of thousands to build defensive walls. Regional kings in northern and western regions of China had already constructed many walls in their realms in an effort to

discourage raids by nomadic peoples. Qin Shihuangdi ordered workers to link the existing sections into a massive defensive barrier that was a precursor to the Great Wall of China.

The Burning of the Books It is likely that many Chinese welcomed the political stability introduced by the Qin dynasty, but by no means did the new regime win universal acceptance. Confucians, Daoists, and others launched a vigorous campaign of criticism. In an effort to reassert his authority, Qin Shihuangdi ordered execution for those who criticized his regime, and he demanded the burning of all books of philosophy, ethics, history, and literature. His decree exempted works on medicine, fortune-telling, and agriculture on the grounds that they had some utilitarian value. The emperor also spared the official history of the Qin state. Other works, however, largely went into the flames during the next few years.

The First Emperor took his policy seriously and enforced it earnestly. In the year following his decree, Qin Shihuangdi is said to have sentenced some 460 scholars residing in the capital to be buried alive for their criticism of his regime, and he forced many other critics from the provinces into the army and dispatched them to dangerous frontier posts. For the better part of a generation, there was no open discussion of classical literary or philosophical works. When it became safe again to speak openly, scholars began a long and painstaking task of reconstructing the suppressed texts. In some cases, scholars had managed, at great personal risk, to hide copies of the forbidden books, which they retrieved and recirculated. In other cases they reassembled texts that they had committed to memory. In many cases, however, works suppressed by Qin Shihuangdi simply disappeared.

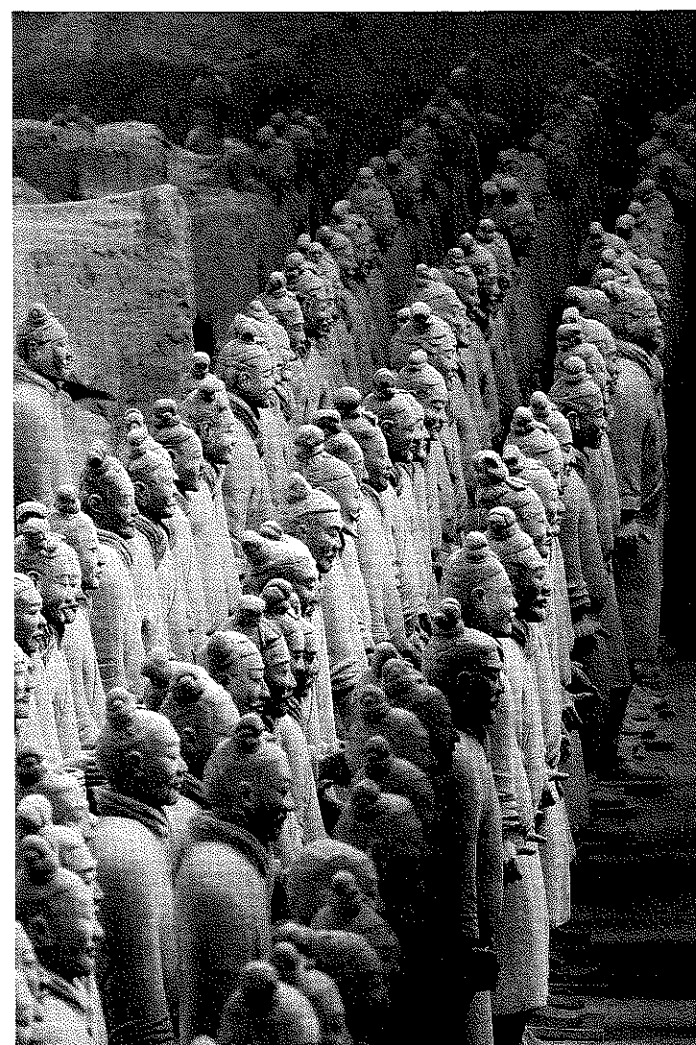
Qin Centralization The First Emperor launched several initiatives that enhanced the unity of China. In keeping with his policy of centralization, he standardized the laws, currencies, weights, and measures of the various regions of China. Previously, regional states had organized their own legal and economic systems, which often conflicted with one another and hampered commerce and communications across state boundaries. Uniform coinage and legal standards encouraged the integration of China's various regions into a more tightly knit society than had ever been conceivable before. The roads and bridges that Qin Shihuangdi built throughout his realm, like those built in other classical societies, also encouraged economic integration: though constructed largely with military uses in mind, they served as fine highways for interregional commerce.

Standardized Script Perhaps even more important than his legal and economic policies was the First Emperor's standardization of Chinese script. Before the Qin dynasty, all regions of China used scripts derived from the one employed at the Shang court, but they had developed along different lines

Xianyang (SHYAHN-YAHNG)

and had become mutually unrecognizable. In hopes of ensuring better understanding and uniform application of his policies, Qin Shihuangdi mandated the use of a common script throughout his empire. The regions of China continued to use different spoken languages, as they do even today, but they wrote those languages with a common script—just as if Europeans spoke English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and other languages but wrote them all down in Latin. In China, speakers of different languages use the same written symbols, but pronounce them and process them mentally in different ways. Nevertheless, the common script enables them to communicate in writing across linguistic boundaries.

In spite of his ruthlessness, Qin Shihuangdi ranks as one of the most important figures in Chinese history. The First Emperor established a precedent for centralized imperial rule, which remained the norm in China until the early twentieth century. He also pointed China in the direction of political and cultural unity, and with some periods of interruption, China has remained politically and culturally unified to the present day.



Tomb of the First Emperor Qin Shihuangdi died in 210 B.C.E. His final resting place was a lavish tomb constructed by some seven hundred thousand drafted laborers as a permanent monument to the First Emperor. Rare and expensive grave goods accompanied the emperor in burial, along with sacrificed slaves, concubines, and many of the craftsmen who designed and built the tomb. Qin Shihuangdi was laid to rest in an elaborate underground palace lined with bronze and protected by traps and crossbows rigged to fire at intruders. The ceiling of the palace featured paintings of the stars and planets, and a vast map of the First Emperor's realm, with flowing mercury representing its rivers and seas, decorated the floor. Buried in the vicinity of the tomb was an entire army of life-size pottery figures to guard the emperor in death. Since 1974, when scholars began to excavate the area around Qin Shihuangdi's tomb, many thousands of terra-cotta sculptures have come to light, including magnificently detailed soldiers, horses, and weapons.

The terra-cotta army of Qin Shihuangdi protected his tomb until recent times, but it could not save his successors or his empire. The First Emperor had conscripted millions of laborers from all parts of China to work on ambitious public works projects such as palaces, roads, bridges, irrigation systems, defensive walls, and his tomb. Although those projects increased productivity and promoted the integration of China's various regions, they also generated tremendous ill will among laborers compelled to leave their families and their lands. Revolts began in the year after Qin Shihuangdi's death, and in 207 B.C.E. waves of rebels overwhelmed the Qin court, slaughtering government officials and burning state buildings. The Qin dynasty quickly dissolved in chaos.

The Early Han Dynasty

Liu Bang The bloody end of the Qin dynasty might well have ended the experiment with centralized imperial rule in China. Although ambitious governors and generals could have carved China into regions and contested one another for hegemony in a reprise of the Period of the Warring States, centralized rule returned almost immediately, largely because of a determined commander named **Liu Bang**. Judging from the historian **Sima Qian's** account, Liu Bang was not a colorful or charismatic figure—indeed, he was a crude and somewhat oafish character with a large appetite for strong drink—but

One detachment of the formidable, life-size, terra-cotta army buried in the vicinity of Qin Shihuangdi's tomb to protect the emperor after his death. The army consists of soldiers by the tens of thousands, along with weapons, horses, carts, and equipment. What does the construction of such a tomb suggest about Qin Shihuangdi's power and ability to command resources?

he was also a persistent man and a methodical planner. He surrounded himself with brilliant advisors and enjoyed the unwavering loyalty of his troops. By 206 B.C.E. he had restored order throughout China and established himself at the head of a new dynasty.

Liu Bang called the new dynasty the Han, in honor of his native land. The Han dynasty turned out to be one of the longest and most influential in all of Chinese history. It lasted for more than four hundred years, from 206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E., although for a brief period (9–23 C.E.) a usurper temporarily displaced Han rule. Thus historians conventionally divide the dynasty into the Early Han (206 B.C.E.–9 C.E.) and the Later Han (25–220 C.E.).

The Han dynasty consolidated the tradition of centralized imperial rule that the Qin dynasty had pioneered. During the **Early Han**, emperors ruled from Chang'an, a cosmopolitan city near modern Xi'an that became the cultural capital of China. They mostly used wood as a building material, and later dynasties built over their city, so nothing of Han-era Chang'an survives. Contemporaries described Chang'an as a thriving metropolis with a fine imperial palace, busy markets, and expansive parks. During the Later Han, the emperors moved their capital east to Luoyang, also a cosmopolitan city second in importance only to Chang'an throughout much of Chinese history.

Early Han Policies During the early days of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang attempted to follow a middle path between the decentralized network of political alliances of the Zhou dynasty and the tightly centralized state of the Qin. Zhou decentralization encouraged political chaos, he thought, because regional governors were powerful enough to resist the emperor and pursue their own ambitions. Liu Bang thought that Qin centralization created a new set of problems, however, because it provided little incentive for imperial family members to support the dynasty.

Liu Bang tried to save the advantages and avoid the excesses of both Zhou and Qin dynasties. On the one hand, he allotted large landholdings to members of the imperial family, in the expectation that they would provide a reliable network of support for his rule. On the other hand, he divided the empire into administrative districts governed by officials who served at the emperor's pleasure in the expectation that he could exercise effective control over the development and implementation of his policies.

Liu Bang learned quickly that reliance on his family did not guarantee support for the emperor. In 200 B.C.E. an army of nomadic **Xiongnu** warriors besieged Liu Bang and almost captured him. He managed to escape—but without receiving the support he had expected from his family members. From that point forward, Liu Bang and his successors followed a policy of centralization. They reclaimed lands from family members, absorbed those lands into the imperial domain, and entrusted political responsibilities to an administrative bureaucracy. Thus, despite a brief flirtation with a decentralized

government, the Han dynasty left as its principal political legacy a tradition of centralized imperial rule.

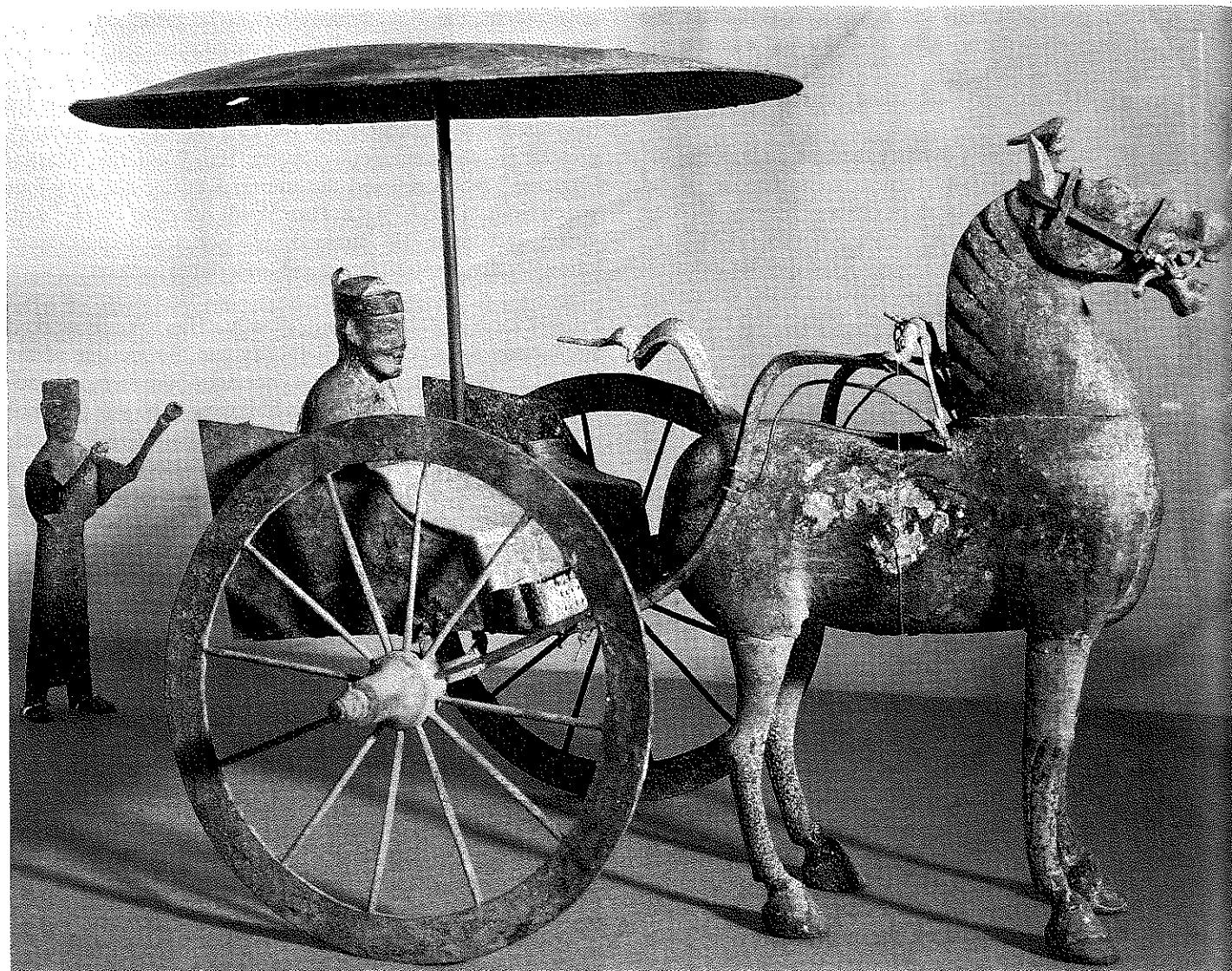
The Martial Emperor, Han Wudi Much of the reason for the Han dynasty's success was the long reign of the dynasty's greatest and most energetic emperor, Han Wudi, the "Martial Emperor," who occupied the imperial throne for fifty-four years, from 141 to 87 B.C.E. **Han Wudi** ruled his empire with vision and vigor. He pursued two policies in particular: administrative centralization and imperial expansion.

Han Centralization Domestically, Han Wudi worked strenuously to increase the authority and the prestige of the central government. He built an enormous bureaucracy to administer his empire, and like Qin Shihuangdi, he sent imperial officers to implement his policies and maintain order in administrative provinces and districts. He also continued the Qin policy of building roads and canals to facilitate trade and communication between China's regions. To finance the vast machinery of his government, he levied taxes on agriculture, trade, and craft industries, and he established imperial monopolies on the production of essential goods such as iron and salt while placing the lucrative liquor industry under state supervision.

In building such an enormous governmental structure, Han Wudi faced a serious problem of recruitment. He needed thousands of reliable, intelligent, educated individuals to run his bureaucracy, but education in China took place largely on an individual, ad hoc basis. Men such as Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi accepted students and tutored them, but there was no system to provide a continuous supply of educated candidates for office.

The Confucian Educational System Han Wudi addressed that problem in 124 B.C.E. by establishing an imperial institute of higher learning that prepared young men for government service. Personally, the Martial Emperor was a practical man of affairs who cared little for learning. Yet Han Wudi recognized that the success of his efforts at bureaucratic centralization would depend on a corps of educated officeholders. The imperial institute took Confucianism—the only Chinese cultural tradition developed enough to provide rigorous intellectual discipline—as the basis for its curriculum. Ironically, then, while he partially relied on Legalist principles of government, Han Wudi ensured the long-term survival of the Confucian tradition by establishing it as the official imperial ideology. By the end of the Early Han dynasty, the imperial university enrolled more than three thousand students, and by the end of the Later Han, the student population had risen to more than thirty thousand.

Han Imperial Expansion While he moved aggressively to centralize power and authority at home, Han Wudi pursued



Model of a luxury chariot of the kind used by high imperial officials in the Qin and Han dynasties. Crafted from bronze with silver inlay, this model is about one-third life size.

an equally vigorous foreign policy of imperial expansion. He invaded northern Vietnam and Korea, subjected them to Han rule, and brought them into the orbit of Chinese society. He ruled both lands through a Chinese-style government, and Confucian values followed the Han armies into the new colonies. Over the course of the centuries, the educational systems of both northern Vietnam and Korea drew their inspiration almost entirely from Confucianism.

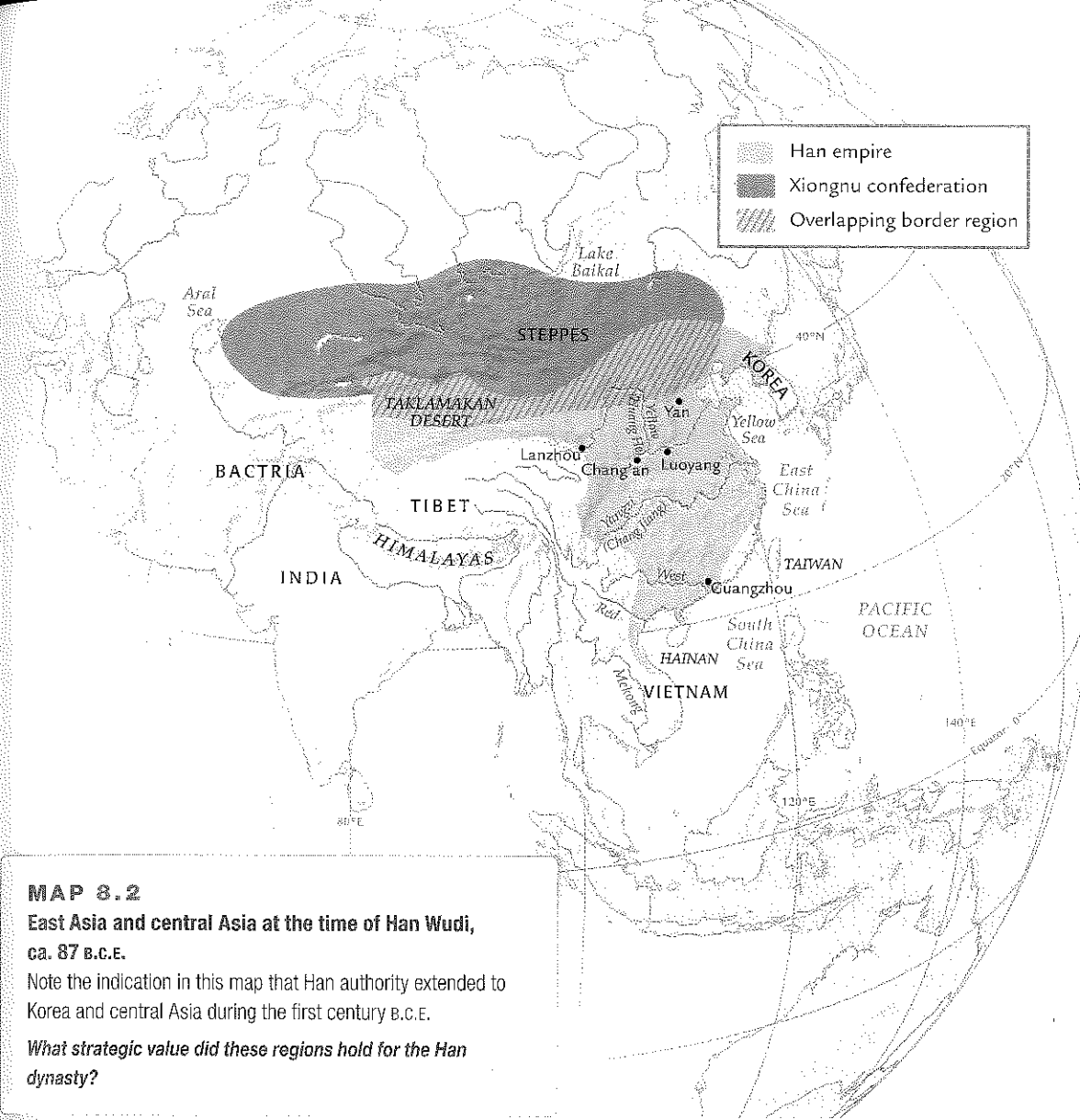
The Xiongnu The greatest foreign challenge that Han Wudi faced came from the Xiongnu, a nomadic people from the steppes of central Asia, the Xiongnu were superb horsemen.

Xiongnu boys learned to ride sheep and shoot rodents at an early age, and as they grew older they graduated to larger animals and aimed their bows and arrows at larger prey. Their

Thinking about TRADITIONS

Confucians and Legalists

Han dynasty rulers drew on both Confucian and Legalist traditions in organizing their state. How were they able to combine such different schools of thought? How did Confucian and Legalist traditions reinforce each other in classical China?



MAP 8.2

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

Note the indication in this map that Han authority extended to Korea and central Asia during the first century B.C.E.

What strategic value did these regions hold for the Han dynasty?

weaponry was not as sophisticated as that of the Chinese: their bows and arrows were not nearly as lethal as the ingenious and powerful crossbows wielded by Chinese warriors. But their mobility offered the Xiongnu a distinct advantage. When they could not satisfy their needs and desires through peaceful trade, they mounted sudden raids into villages or trading areas, where they commandeered food supplies or manufactured goods and then rapidly departed. Because they had no cities or settled places to defend, the Xiongnu could quickly disperse when confronted by a superior force.

During the reign of **Modu** (210–174 B.C.E.), their most successful leader, the Xiongnu ruled a vast federation of nomadic peoples that stretched from the Aral Sea to the Yellow Sea. Modu brought strict military discipline to the Xiongnu. According to Sima Qian, Modu once instructed his forces to shoot their arrows at whatever target he himself selected. He aimed in succession at his favorite horse, one of his wives, and his father's best horse, and he summarily executed those who failed to discharge their arrows. When his forces reliably followed his orders, Modu targeted his father, who immediately fell under a hail of arrows, leaving Modu as the Xiongnu chief.

With its highly disciplined army, the Xiongnu empire was a source of concern to the Han emperors. During the early days of the dynasty, they attempted to pacify the Xiongnu by paying them tribute—providing them with food and finished goods in hopes that they would refrain from mounting raids in China—or by arranging marriages between the ruling houses of the two peoples in hopes of establishing peaceful diplomatic relations. Neither method succeeded for long.

Han Expansion into Central Asia Ultimately, Han Wudi decided to go on the offensive against the Xiongnu. He invaded central Asia with vast armies—sometimes including as many as one hundred thousand troops—and brought much of the Xiongnu empire under Chinese military control. He pacified a long central Asian corridor extending almost to Bactria (modern Afghanistan), which prevented the Xiongnu from maintaining the integrity of their empire and which served also as the lifeline of a trade network that linked much of the Eurasian landmass. He even planted colonies of Chinese cultivators in the oasis communities of central Asia. As a result of

Thinking about ENCOUNTERS

Relations between Chinese and Xiongnu

Interaction between peoples of different societies can involve military conflict as well as more peaceful dealings, such as trade and exchanges of ideas. Why did Chinese and Xiongnu peoples engage in frequent hostilities rather than more peaceful interactions during the Han dynasty?

those efforts, the Xiongnu empire soon fell into disarray. For the moment, the Han state enjoyed uncontested hegemony in both east Asia and central Asia. Before long, however, economic and social problems within China brought serious problems for the Han dynasty itself.

FROM ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TO SOCIAL DISORDER

Already during the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, a productive agricultural economy supported the emergence of complex society in China. High agricultural productivity continued during the Qin and Han dynasties, and it supported the development of craft industries such as the forging of iron tools and the weaving of silk textiles. During the Han dynasty, however, China experienced serious social and economic problems as land became concentrated in the hands of a small, wealthy elite class. Social tensions generated banditry, rebellion, and even the temporary deposition of the Han state itself. Although Han rulers regained the throne, they presided over a much-weakened realm. By the early third century C.E., social and political problems had brought the Han dynasty to an end.

Productivity and Prosperity during the Early Han

Patriarchal Social Order The structure of Chinese society during the Qin and Han dynasties was similar to that of the Zhou era. Patriarchal households averaged five inhabitants, although several generations of aristocratic families sometimes lived together in large compounds. During the Han dynasty, moralists sought to enhance the authority of patriarchal family heads by emphasizing the importance of filial piety and women's subordination to their menfolk. The anonymous Confucian *Classic of Filial Piety*, composed probably in the early Han dynasty, taught that children should obey and honor their parents as well as other superiors and political authorities.

Ban Zhao, Woman Scholar An equally influential treatise was *Lessons for Women* by **Ban Zhao** (45–120 C.E.), perhaps the most famous woman scholar in Chinese history. Ban Zhao was born into a prominent literary and political family. Her father was a famous scholar and educator. One of her twin

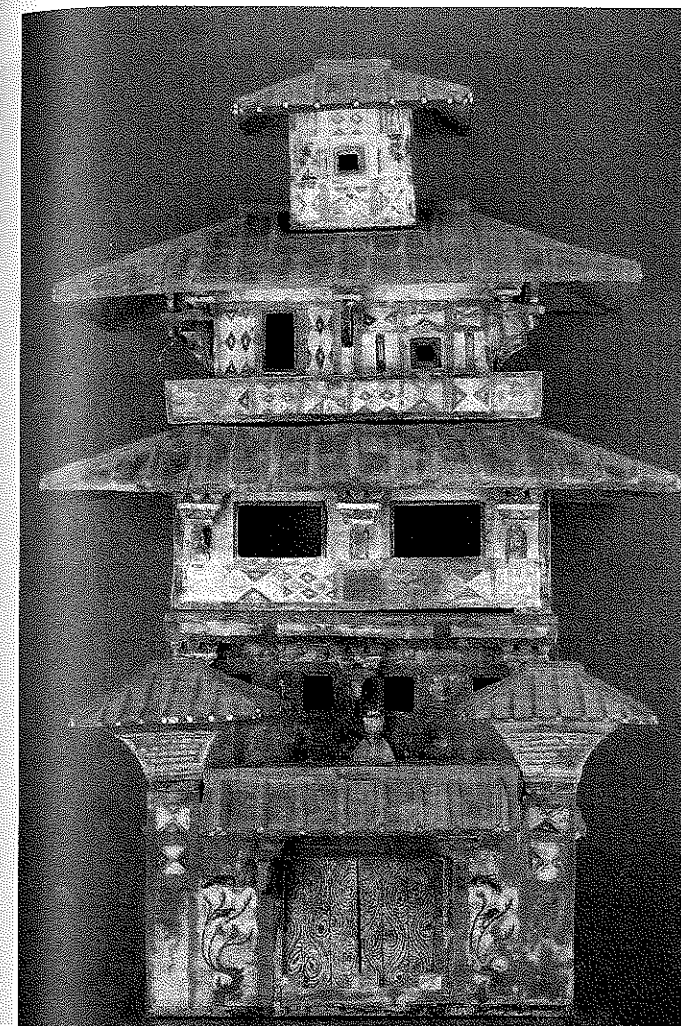
brothers was a powerful general, and the other followed in the footsteps of Sima Qian as the foremost historian of the later Han dynasty. Ban Zhao herself enjoyed an advanced education and argued in *Lessons for Women* that education should be available to all children—girls as well as boys. Yet Ban Zhao agreed with the *Classic of Filial Piety* and Confucian morality in general that the virtues most appropriate for women were humility, obedience, subservience, and devotion to their fathers, husbands, and sons. From the time of its composition around 100 C.E. to the early twentieth century,

Lessons for Women was one of the most popular and most widely read statements on the role of women in Chinese society.

The vast majority of the Chinese population worked in the countryside cultivating grains and vegetables, which they harvested in larger quantities than ever before. In late Zhou times, cultivators often strengthened their plows with iron tips, but metalworkers did not produce enough iron to provide all-metal tools. During the Han dynasty the iron industry entered a period of rapid growth, and cultivators used not only plows but also shovels, picks, hoes, sickles, and spades with iron parts. The tougher implements enabled cultivators to produce more food and support larger populations than ever before. The agricultural surplus allowed many Chinese to produce fine manufactured goods and to engage in trade.

Iron Metallurgy The significance of the iron industry went far beyond agriculture. Chinese entrepreneurs had discovered how to make cast iron by the fourth century B.C.E., and production surged during the Han dynasty. The cast-iron industry became so important that Emperor Han Wudi placed it under state control and created forty-six regional offices to supervise iron production. Han artisans experimented with production techniques and learned to craft fine utensils for both domestic and military uses. Iron pots, stoves, knives, needles, axes, hammers, saws, and other tools became standard fixtures in households that could not have afforded more expensive bronze utensils. The ready availability of iron also had important military implications. Craftsmen designed suits of iron armor to protect soldiers against arrows and blows, and the strength and sharpness of Han swords, spears, and arrowheads help to explain the success of Chinese armies against the Xiongnu and other nomadic peoples.

Silk Textiles Textile production—particularly **sericulture**, the manufacture of silk—became an especially important industry. The origins of sericulture date to the fourth millennium B.C.E., long before the ancient Xia dynasty, but only in Han times did sericulture expand from its original home in the Yellow River valley to most parts of China. It developed especially rapidly in the southern regions known today as Sichuan and Guangdong provinces, and the industry thrived after the establishment of long-distance trade relations with western lands in the second century B.C.E.



Clay model of an aristocratic house of the sort inhabited by a powerful clan during the Han dynasty. This model came from a tomb near the city of Guangzhou in southern China.

Although silkworms inhabited much of Eurasia, Chinese silk was especially fine because of advanced sericulture techniques. Chinese producers bred their silkworms, fed them on finely chopped mulberry leaves, and carefully unraveled their cocoons so as to obtain long fibers of raw silk that they wove into light, strong, lustrous fabrics. (In other lands, producers relied on wild silkworms that ate a variety of leaves and chewed through their cocoons, leaving only short fibers that yielded lower-quality fabrics.) Chinese silk became a prized commodity in India, Persia, Mesopotamia, and even the distant Roman empire. Commerce in silk and other products led to the establishment of an intricate network of trade routes known collectively as the Silk Roads (discussed in chapter 12).

Paper While expanding the iron and silk industries, Han craftsmen also invented paper. In earlier times Chinese scribes had written mostly on bamboo strips and silk fabrics but also inscribed messages on oracle bones and bronzewares. Probably before 100 C.E. Chinese craftsmen began to fashion hemp, bark, and textile fibers into sheets of paper, which was less expensive than silk and easier to write on than bamboo. Although wealthy elites continued to read books written on silk rolls, paper soon became the preferred medium for most writing.

Indeed, classical China was an incubator of technological innovation. Quite apart from their production of iron, silk, and paper, Chinese artisans found ways to improve on earlier technologies and also to devise entirely new inventions. Shortly before the time of the Qin and Han dynasties, for example, military engineers outfitted primitive crossbows, which had already been in use for several centuries, with a sophisticated trigger mechanism that turned them into powerful weapons. Meanwhile, others invented specially designed horse collars, which enabled cultivators to coax maximum power out of their draft animals. Somewhat later, about the first century C.E., nautical engineers invented the ship's rudder, which greatly simplified the steering of sailing vessels. These and other inventions contributed to high prosperity, especially during the early years of the Han dynasty.

Economic and Social Difficulties

In spite of general prosperity, China began to experience economic and social difficulties in the Early Han period. The military adventures and the central Asian policy of Han Wudi caused severe economic strain. Expeditions against the Xiongnu and the establishment of agricultural colonies in central Asia were extremely expensive undertakings, and they rapidly consumed the empire's surplus wealth. To finance his ventures, Han Wudi raised taxes and confiscated land and personal property from wealthy individuals, sometimes on the pretext that they had violated imperial laws. Those measures did not kill

Reverberations of Long-Distance Trade Networks

As we saw in chapter 7, the creation and maintenance of large empires helped to create the conditions for greatly expanded networks of long-distance trade during the classical period. As you have seen in this chapter, Chinese silk became one of the most highly coveted items of trade over vast areas of Eurasia in this period. Think about the ways that Han state policies were connected to the enormous popularity of Chinese silk in places as far afield as the Mediterranean basin. How was it that so many people were able to discover the beauty of Chinese silk in this period? How might the demand for Chinese silk have affected regional Chinese economies during the Han dynasty?

Connecting the Sources

Prescriptive literature and the lives of Chinese women during the Han dynasty

The problem Writing about culture and social relationships in the distant past poses specific challenges for historians. Even in societies like China, where literary traditions were already highly sophisticated by the time of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), available sources illuminating particular cultural attitudes or social relations were nevertheless limited. Existing textual sources tended to be written by educated elites rather than by the peasant farmers or laborers who made up the majority of the population. As a result, historians often have to rely on sources that tell us what educated people said about the ways culture and social relationships should be. Historians call these types of texts **prescriptive literature**, because they *prescribe* how things should be, at least according to their authors. But what can prescriptive literature tell us about how real people actually interacted? Did prescriptive literature *reflect* what culture and social relationships were like for ordinary people, or did people write prescriptive literature in order to *shape* those aspects of society?

When exploring the effects of Confucianism on women's lives in Han China, for example, historians must rely on a relatively small body of textual sources. Two of the most commonly known of these sources—the *Analects* of Confucius and Ban Zhao's *Lessons for Women*—were written by highly educated elites centuries apart from one another. Read the following two documents and think about what historians can and cannot understand about the lives of women in Han China by reading prescriptive literature.

The documents Read the documents below, and consider carefully the questions that follow.

Document 1: *The Analects of Confucius do not specifically address the subject of women in many places, although women were implicitly included in Confucius's vision of a moral and ethical society. This short selection, titled "On Women and Servants," is one place where women are mentioned explicitly.*

The text reads:

17:25 *Women and servants are most difficult to nurture. If one is close to them, they lose their reserve, while if one is distant, they feel resentful.*

Document 2: *This is an excerpt from Ban Zhao's Lessons for Women, written in about 80 C.E.*

The text reads:

Being careless, and by nature stupid, I taught and trained my children without system. . . .

But I do grieve that you, my daughters, just now at the age for marriage, have not at this time had gradual training and advice; that you still have not learned the proper customs for married women. I fear that by failure in good manners in other families you will humiliate both your ancestors and your clan. . . . in order that you may have something wherewith to benefit your persons, I wish every one of you, my daughters each to write out a copy for yourself.

From this time on every one of you strive to practice these lessons.

HUMILITY

On the third day after the birth of a girl the ancients observed three customs: first to place the baby below the bed; second to give her a potsherd [pottery piece] with which to play; and third to announce her birth to her ancestors by an offering. Now to lay the baby below the bed plainly indicated that she is lowly and weak, and should regard it as her primary duty to humble herself before others. To give her potsherds with which to play indubitably signified that she should practice labor and consider it her primary duty to be industrious. To announce her birth before her ancestors clearly meant that she ought to esteem as her primary duty the continuation of the observance of worship in the home.

These three ancient customs epitomize woman's ordinary way of life and the teachings of the traditional ceremonial rites and regulations. Let a woman modestly yield to others; let her respect others; let her put others first, herself last. Should she do something good, let her not mention it; should she do

something bad let her not deny it. Let her bear disgrace; let her even endure when others speak or do evil to her. Always let her seem to tremble and to fear. When a woman follows such maxims as these then she may be said to humble herself before others.

No woman who observes these three fundamentals of life has ever had a bad reputation or has fallen into disgrace. If a woman fails to observe them, how can her name be honored; how can she but bring disgrace upon herself?

WOMANLY QUALIFICATIONS

A woman ought to have four qualifications: (1) womanly virtue; (2) womanly words; (3) womanly bearing; and (4) womanly work. Now what is called womanly virtue need not be brilliant ability, exceptionally different from others. Womanly words need be neither clever in debate nor keen in conversation. Womanly appearance requires neither a pretty nor a perfect face and form. Womanly work need not be work done more skillfully than that of others.

To guard carefully her chastity; to control circumspectly her behavior; in every motion to exhibit modesty; and to model each act on the best usage, this is womanly virtue.

To choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and nor to weary others with much conversation, may be called the characteristics of womanly words.

To wash and scrub filth away; to keep clothes and ornaments fresh and clean; to wash the head and bathe the body regularly, and to keep the person free from disgraceful filth, may be called the characteristics of womanly bearing.

With whole-hearted devotion to sew and to weave; to love not gossip and silly laughter; in cleanliness and order to prepare the wine and food for serving guests, may be called the characteristics of womanly work.

These four qualifications characterize the greatest virtue of a woman. No woman can afford to be without them. In fact they are very easy to possess if a woman only treasure them in her heart. The ancients had a saying: "Is love afar off? If I desire love, then love is at hand!" So can it be said of these qualifications.

AP Test Practice

- Which of the following represents a common theme in Han beliefs that is reflective of the ideas expressed in Documents 1 and 2?
 - Women must be instructed in their proper place in society from birth.
 - The social and cultural role of women is inherently lower than that of men.
 - Women add little useful or practical value to society.
 - Men should seek to relieve women of their work by employing servants.
- Which additional piece of evidence could a modern-day historian best use to expand the interpretation of women limited by the prescriptive nature of these two documents?
 - An untranslated version of the *Analects* of Confucius
 - An historical journal article on Han perspectives on women
 - A diary written by a Chinese woman of the Han dynasty era
 - A biography of Ban Zhao written by a respected scholar

Source Websites: **Document 1:** http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/confucius_women_servants.pdf **Document 2:** <http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~phalsall/texts/banzhao.html>



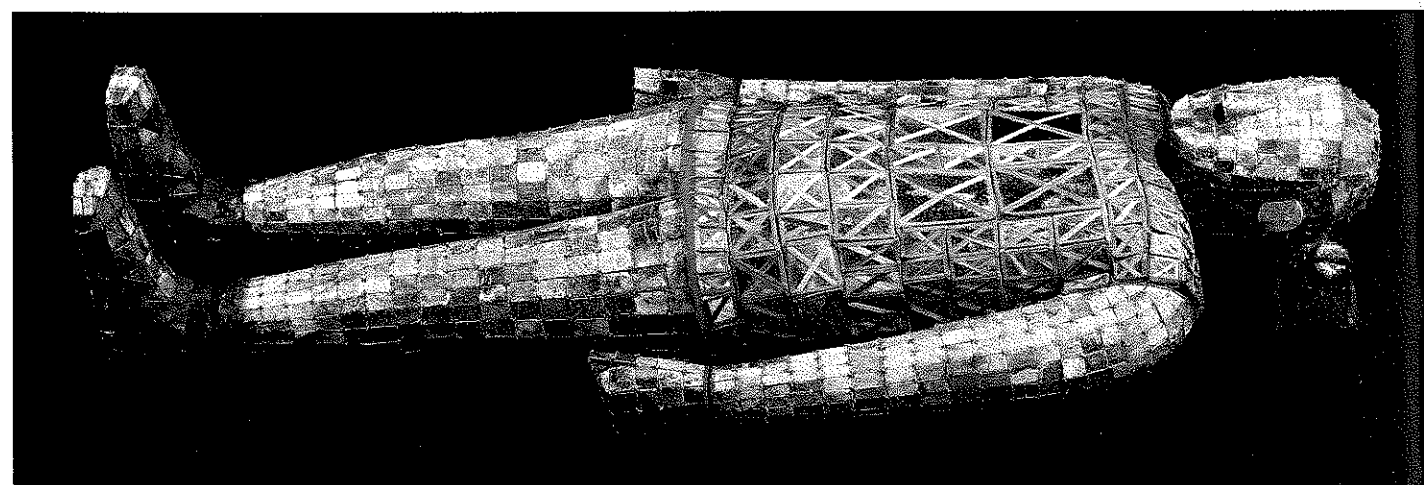
Han gentlemen sport luxurious silk gowns as they engage in sophisticated conversation. Wealthy individuals and ruling elites commonly dressed in silk, but peasants and others of the lower classes rarely if ever donned silk garments.

industry and commerce in China, but they discouraged investment in manufacturing and trading enterprises, which in turn had a dampening effect on the larger economy.

Social Tensions Distinctions between rich and poor hardened during the course of the Han dynasty. Wealthy individuals wore fine silk garments, leather shoes, and jewelry of jade and gold, whereas the poor classes made do with rough hemp clothing and sandals. Tables in wealthy households held pork, fish, fowl, and fine aged wines, but the diet of the poor consisted mostly of grain or rice supplemented by small quantities of vegetables or meat. By the first century B.C.E., social and economic differences had generated serious tensions, and peasants in hard-pressed regions began to organize rebellions

in hopes of gaining a larger share of Han society's resources.

Land Distribution A particularly difficult problem concerned the distribution of land. Individual economic problems brought on by poor harvests, high taxes, or crushing burdens of debt forced many small landowners to sell their property under unfavorable conditions or even to forfeit it in exchange for cancellation of their debts. In extreme cases, individuals had to sell themselves and their families into slavery to satisfy their creditors. Owners of large estates not only increased the size of their holdings by absorbing the property of their less fortunate neighbors but also increased the efficiency of their operations by employing cheap labor. Sometimes cheap laborers came in the form of slaves, other times in the form of tenant farmers who had to deliver as much as half their produce to the landowner for the right to till his property. In either case, the laborers worked on terms that favored the landlords.



In Han times the wealthiest classes enjoyed the privilege of being buried in suits of jade plaques sewn together with gold threads, like the burial dress of Liu Sheng, who died in 113 B.C.E. at Manzheng in Hebei Province. Legend held that jade prevented decomposition of the deceased's body. Scholars have estimated that a jade burial suit like this one required ten years' labor. What does such a suit tell us about the lives of the Chinese elite during the Han dynasty?

By the end of the first century B.C.E., land had accumulated in the hands of a relatively small number of individuals who owned vast estates, while ever-increasing numbers of peasant cultivators led difficult lives with few prospects for improvement. Landless peasants became restive, and Chinese society faced growing problems of banditry and sporadic rebellion. Because the Han emperors depended heavily on the political cooperation of large landowners, however, they did not attempt any serious reform of the landholding system.

The Reign of Wang Mang Tensions came to a head during the early first century C.E. when a powerful and respected Han minister named **Wang Mang** undertook a thoroughgoing program of reform. In 6 C.E. a two-year-old boy inherited the Han imperial throne. Because the boy was unable to govern, Wang Mang served as his regent. Many officials regarded Wang as more capable than members of the Han family and urged him to claim the imperial honor for himself. In 9 C.E. he did just that: announcing that the mandate of heaven had passed from the Han to his family, he seized the throne. Wang Mang then introduced a series of wide-ranging reforms that have prompted some historians to refer to him as the "socialist emperor."

The most important reforms concerned landed property: Wang Mang limited the amount of land that a family could hold and ordered officials to break up large estates, redistribute them, and provide landless individuals with property to cultivate. Despite his good intentions, the socialist emperor attempted to impose his policy without adequate preparation and communication. The result was confusion: landlords resisted a policy that threatened their holdings, and even peasants found its application inconsistent and unsatisfactory. After several years of chaos, Wang Mang faced the additional misfortune of poor harvests and famine, which sparked

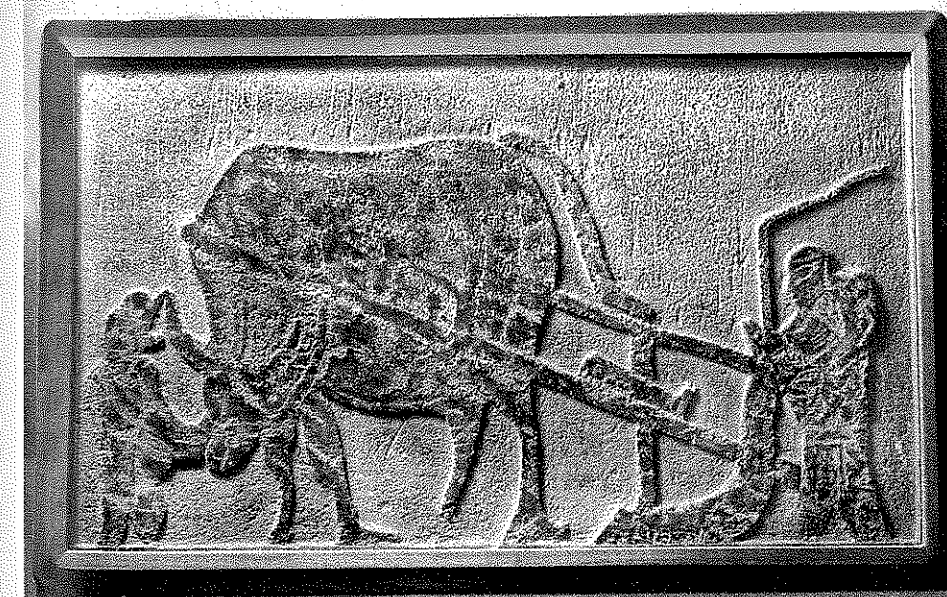
widespread revolts against his rule. In 23 C.E. a coalition of disgruntled landlords and desperate peasants ended both his dynasty and his life.

The Later Han Dynasty

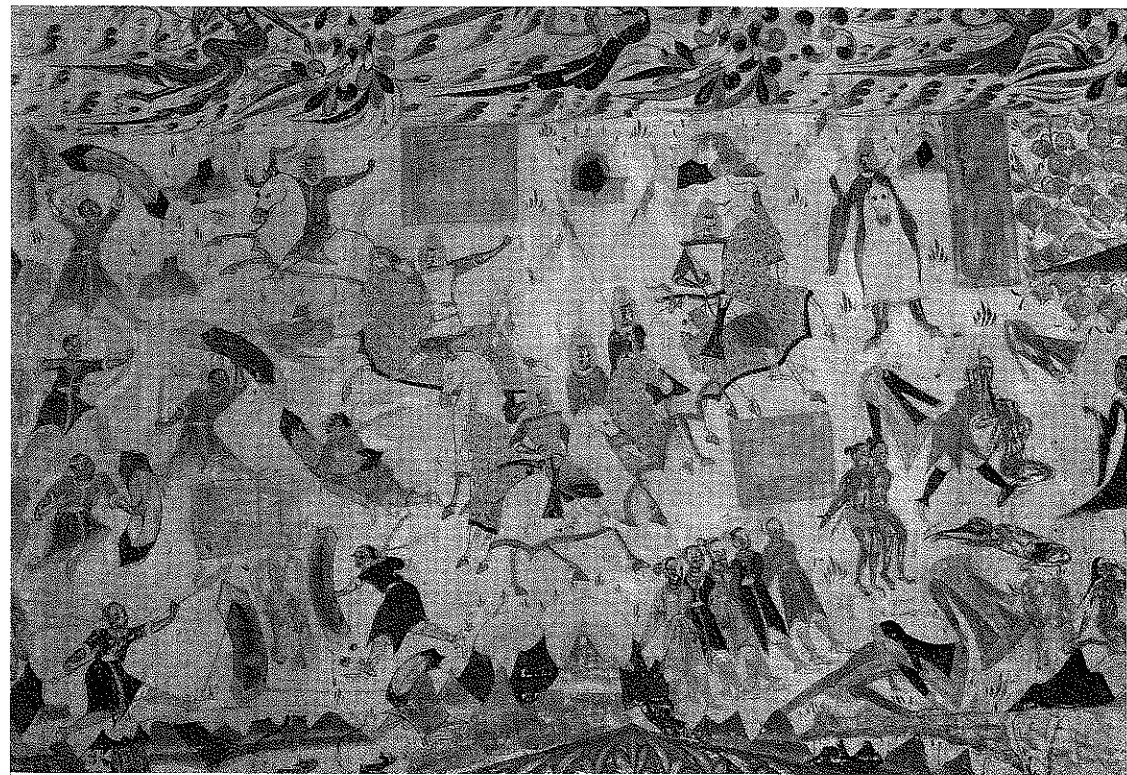
Within two years a recovered Han dynasty returned to power, but it ruled over a weakened realm. The **Later Han** emperors even decided to abandon Chang'an, which had suffered grave damage during the years of chaos and rebellion, and establish a new capital at Luoyang. Nevertheless, during the early years of the Later Han, emperors ruled vigorously in the manner of Liu Bang and Han Wudi. They regained control of the centralized administration and reorganized the state bureaucracy. They also maintained the Chinese presence in central Asia, continued to keep the Xiongnu in submission, and exercised firm control over the Silk Roads.

The Yellow Turban Uprising The Later Han emperors did not seriously address the problem of land distribution that had helped to bring down the Early Han dynasty. The wealthy classes still lived in relative luxury while peasants worked under difficult conditions. The empire continued to suffer the effects of banditry and rebellions organized by desperate peasants with few opportunities to improve their lot. The **Yellow Turban uprising**—so named because of the distinctive headgear worn by the rebels—was a particularly serious revolt that raged throughout China and tested the resilience of the Han state during the late second century C.E. Although the Later Han dynasty possessed the military power required to keep civil disorder under reasonable control, rebellions by the Yellow Turbans and others weakened the Han state during the second and third centuries C.E.

Collapse of the Han Dynasty The Later Han emperors were unable, however, to prevent the development of factions at court that paralyzed the central government. Factions of imperial family members, Confucian scholar bureaucrats, and court eunuchs sought to increase their influence, protect their own interests, and



A painted brick depicts a peasant working in the fields with an ox and a wooden harrow. By the Han dynasty, many plows of this type had iron teeth. Produced in the third or fourth century C.E., this brick painting came from a tomb in Gansu Province in western China.



Though it dates from a somewhat later era, about the sixth century C.E., this cave painting from Dunhuang in Gansu Province (western China) offers some idea of the chaos that engulfed China as the Han dynasty crumbled.

destroy their rivals. On several occasions, relations between the various factions became so strained that they made war against each other. In 189 C.E., for example, a faction led by an imperial relative descended on the Han palace and slaughtered more than two thousand beardless men in an effort to destroy the eunuchs as a political force. In that respect the

attack succeeded. From the unmeasured violence of the operation, however, it is clear that the Later Han dynasty had reached a point of internal weakness from which it could not easily recover. Indeed, early in the next century, the central government disintegrated, and for almost four centuries China remained divided into several large regional kingdoms.

CHRONOLOGY

6th century B.C.E.(?)	Laozi
551–479 B.C.E.	Confucius
403–221 B.C.E.	Period of the Warring States
390–338 B.C.E.	Shang Yang
372–289 B.C.E.	Mencius
298–238 B.C.E.	Xunzi
280–233 B.C.E.	Han Feizi
221–207 B.C.E.	Qin dynasty
206 B.C.E.–9 C.E.	Early Han dynasty
141–87 B.C.E.	Reign of Han Wudi
9–23 C.E.	Reign of Wang Mang
25–220 C.E.	Later Han dynasty

AP CHAPTER SUMMARY

Although the Qin state lasted for a mere fourteen years, it opened a new era in Chinese history and clearly illustrates AP World History Theme 3: State-Building, Expansion, and Conflict. Qin conquerors imposed unified rule on politically independent kingdoms and launched an ambitious program to forge culturally distinct regions into a larger Chinese society, an evident example of AP Theme 5: Development and Transformation of Social Structures. The Han dynasty endured for more than four centuries and largely completed the unification of China. Using a combination of Legalism and Confucianism, two of the most important philosophies that had emerged during the late Zhou dynasty, Han rulers built a centralized bureaucracy that administered a unified empire. Han emperors worked particularly closely with Confucian moralists who organized a system of advanced education that provided recruits for the imperial bureaucracy. Moreover, on the basis of a highly productive economy stimulated by technological innovations, Han rulers projected Chinese influence abroad to Korea, Vietnam, and central Asia (AP Theme 4: Creation, Expansion, and Interaction of Economic Systems). Thus, like classical societies in Persia, India, and the Mediterranean basin, Han China produced a set of distinctive political and cultural traditions that shaped and influenced Chinese and neighboring societies for more than a thousand years (AP Theme 2: Development and Interaction of Cultures).

AP TEST PRACTICE

Questions assume cumulative knowledge from this chapter and previous chapters.

MULTIPLE CHOICE Use the excerpts on pages 156 and 159, as well as your knowledge of world history, to answer questions 1–3.

- In the excerpt on page 156, Confucius reflects a belief in governmental rule based primarily on which of the following?
 - Public rituals and ethical behavior
 - Conduct influenced by personal interests
 - Strict and rigid political structure
 - Harsh social discipline and punishment

- The influence of Confucian values in the private sphere was most clearly evident through which of the following developments?
 - The predominance of ancestor worship
 - The increased emphasis on formal education
 - The redefining of traditional gender roles
 - The practice of filial piety
- Based on the second excerpt (page 159), Daoist beliefs differed most strongly from Confucianism by which of the following?
 - The striving for social harmony
 - The dedication to waging war
 - The desire to disengage from the affairs of the world
 - The belief in governmental rule through virtue

SHORT ANSWER Use your knowledge of world history to answer questions 4–5.

- Use the map on page 160 and your knowledge of world history to answer parts A and B.
 - Explain ONE factor that dictated the location of the defensive walls the Qin dynasty maintained and/or built.
 - Identify TWO ways in which the Qin emperor consolidated his control.
- Answer parts A, B, and C.
 - Identify ONE way in which the Han dynasty attempted to maintain policies of its predecessors.
 - Identify ONE way in which the Han dynasty deviated from the policies of its predecessors.
 - Explain ONE example of how the Xiongnu influenced Han policy.

LONG ESSAY Develop a thoughtful and thorough historical argument that answers the question below. Begin your essay with a thesis statement and support it with relevant historical evidence.

- Comparison** Using specific examples, compare the primary competing schools of thought—Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism—that developed during the Period of the Warring States, including the three philosophies' prescriptions for the ills of society.