Classical China: The Qin and Han Dynasties

The Qin Dynasty 221-206 B.C.
The Han Dynasty 206 B.C.- 200 A.D.
Recall: What do we already know about China so far?

- **Geography**
- **Ancient dynasties:**
  - Xia (~2000 BCE?)
  - Shang (1700 BCE-1027 BCE)
  - Zhou (1027 BCE-256 BCE)
Recall: Geography

❖ More isolated than the other early river valley civilizations (mountains, deserts, ocean)- though China did have early contacts with other civilizations, it was the most isolated of the 4 river valley civilizations. This isolation made China self-sufficient in most things, but also contributed to ethnocentrism (believed that China was the “Middle Kingdom”- everything revolved around China)

❖ Relied upon the Huang He (Yellow) and Yangtze rivers- though prone to flooding

❖ More rainfall than the other civilizations- rice was the major crop
Recall: XIA DYNASTY
(~2000 BCE)

- Early settlements along the Huang He grew into China’s first cities
- Mainly based on legend—predates written record, so not much is known
- Legend tells of an engineer and mathematician named **Yu (Wu)**, who established flood control and irrigation projects which helped control the Huang He so that settlements could grow
The legend of Wu the engineer
Recall: SHANG DYNASTY (1700 BCE–1027 BCE)

- Normally seen as the first Chinese dynasty since it was the first to leave written records
- Built elaborate palaces and tombs
- **Anyang** - capital of the Shang Dynasty - built mainly of wood
- Higher classes lived in timber-framed houses inside city walls, peasants lived in huts outside the city.
- Cities had earthen walls for protection (*what does this demonstrate about the Shang?*)
- Shang people were constantly waging war - used chariots obtained through contact with western Asia
- Had a professional warrior class - went through lengthy training
Recall: **SHANG DYNASTY (1700 BCE-1027 BCE)**

- Development of Chinese society:
  - Viewed China as the “Middle Kingdom”; outsiders were **barbarians**
  - Group more important than the individual; family most important, then country
  - Emphasized respect toward parents
  - Patriarchal; women treated as inferiors (had arranged marriages)
  - Very distinct social classes: a ruling class of warrior-nobles headed by a king governed the Shang; these families owned the land, and governed local villages and sent **tribute** to the Shang ruler in exchange for local control.
Recall: SHANG DYNASTY (1700 BCE-1027 BCE)

- Development of Chinese culture:
  - Family closely linked to religion- believed the spirits of ancestors had the power to bring good fortune or disaster to living members- demanded attention and respect (ancestor veneration- worshipping of the spirits of ancestors)
  - Polytheistic- consulted the gods through the spirits of ancestors as well as through oracle bones
  - Development of the Chinese writing system
Recall: ZHOU DYNASTY
(1027 BCE-256 BCE)

- Zhou overthrew the Shang in 1027 - adopted much of Shang culture.
- Established the idea of the **Mandate of Heaven** and the **dynastic cycle** - to rule China, must have approval or endorsement from the gods.
- Established a system called **feudalism** - to govern the vast territory, gave control over different regions to members of the royal family and other nobles. Those local rulers would in turn owe loyalty and military service to the king and protection to the people in their local areas.
New Dynasty
- Restores Peace
- Protects Citizens
- Builds Infrastructures

Old Dynasty
- Over Tax Citizens
- Poor Protection
- Decline in Infrastructure
- Injustices

Disasters
- Natural Disasters
- Revolts
- Invaders
Recall: ZHOU DYNASTY
(1027 BCE-256 BCE)

❖ Advancements during the Zhou era:
  – Roads and canals built
  – Coined money introduced

*What effects did these things have on China?*

  – First cast iron produced
Recall: ZHOU DYNASTY (1027 BCE-256 BCE)

❖ 1027 BCE-771 BCE: Zhou empire was generally peaceful and stable
❖ Eventually, local lords grew stronger as their cities expanded- as a result, they became less dependent on the Zhou rulers
❖ More frequently, local lords would fight among themselves for wealth and territory
❖ 771 BCE: Nomads sacked the Zhou capital, murdered the Zhou king- some royal family members escaped
Recall: ZHOU DYNASTY (1027 BCE-256 BCE)

- 771 BCE-256 BCE: Known as the **Warring States Period** in Chinese history
  - Technically the later Zhou era, but Zhou leaders didn’t have much influence over China any longer; instead, local lords fought amongst themselves
  - Traditional Chinese values collapsed during this chaotic time
During this time of chaos and disorder, three distinct schools of thought emerged, each believing it could explain how to bring peace and stability back to China:

- **Confucianism**: Ethical system that emphasized relationships, education, wise government, and respect for parents and ancestors.
- **Daoism (Taoism)**: Emphasized harmony with nature and the natural order.
- **Legalism**: Urged obedience to the law, had harsh punishments.
The Qin Dynasty And The First Emperor (221 BCE-202 BCE)

- The **Qin** state, led by **Shi Huangdi**, emerged as the dominating state during the Warring States period.
- Qin Shi Huangdi called himself the **First Emperor of China**.
- To maintain control over their empire the Qin Kings centralized their power.
- Used legalist ideas which resulted in strict, harsh rule.
- **Centralization**, the process of decision making and control are concentrated to a specific group.
The Qin Dynasty And Legalism

- Under *Legalism* the law was the supreme authority and all people were equal under the eyes of the law.
- Positions in government had power, power did not lie in people and it was government’s duty to rule not people.
- No true creator to *legalism* but was influenced by writings of supporters of a strong government.
The Qin Dynasty and The First Emperor (221 BCE-202 BCE)

- Military victories doubled China’s size
- Commanded all noble families to move to the capital city where he could watch their activities (*why would he do this?*)
- Shi Huangdi seized nobles’ lands, carved China into 36 administrative districts, and sent Qin officials to control them.
The Qin Dynasty And The First Emperor (221 BCE-202 BCE)

Qin Dynasty achievements:

- The beginning and consolidation of imperial China
- Government rules of operations and legal codes applied to all parts of empire
- Introduced standardized money, writing and measurement system
- Built a highway network over 4,000 miles long
- Irrigation projects increased farm production
- Trade increased- created a new class of merchants
- Great Wall of China built
The Qin Dynasty And The First Emperor

❖ The Great Wall was built to stop invasions of nomadic people who were raiding frontier of Qin empire
❖ Great Wall is a combinations of four wall systems of various construction quality
❖ Was built by forced labor and oppressive taxes
❖ Wall is 3,754 miles long and housed soldiers who fought invaders from towers and fortresses
The Qin Dynasty And The First Emperor (221 BCE-202 BCE)

- Government controlled education and thought
- Teachers and the educated who dissented with Qin rule were put to death or banished
- Censorship was enacted towards Confucian scholars and teachings- their books would be burned (*why would he do this?*)
The Qin Dynasty And The First Emperor (221 BCE-202 BCE)

- High taxes, repressive government made the Qin dynasty very unpopular in China
- After Shi Huangdi’s death, peasants rebelled against Shi Huangdi’s son
- 202 BCE: the Qin dynasty gave way to the Han dynasty
The **terra cotta army** was built to protect Emperor Shi Huangdi in the afterlife. There are 8,000 life-sized statues in his tomb.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- After the collapse of the Qin dynasty, peasants rebelled, and rival kings were eager to regain control of regions they held before Shi Huangdi.
- During this civil war, 2 leaders emerged- Xiang Yu, who was an aristocratic general who would allow warlords to keep their territories if they would acknowledge him as their feudal lord, and Liu Bang, one of Xiang Yu’s generals.
- Liu Bang eventually turned on Xiang Yu, and defeated him. He claimed to be the first emperor of the Han Dynasty.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- Liu Bang’s first priority was to establish centralized government. Reporting to Liu Bang’s central government were hundreds of local provincials called *commanderies*.
- Wanted to win popular support- did away with strict legalism in favor of Confucianism ideals
- Lowered taxes, softened harsh punishments- brought peace and stability
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ Liu Bang died in 195 BCE- his son became emperor, but in name only- the real ruler was his mother, Empress Lu. Although she hadn’t been Liu Bang’s only wife, she had powerful friends at court who helped her seize power. She outlived her son and maintained power by naming infants as emperor.

❖ When Empress Lu died in 180 BCE, people who were loyal to Liu Bang’s family came back to power, executed the empress’s relatives.

❖ Emperor would choose one of his wives to be empress- this was very political and often involved alliances, power plays that could distract from governing
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- Liu Bang’s great-grandson **Wudi** continued centralizing policies.
- Wudi is called the “Martial Emperor” because he adopted the policy of expanding the Chinese empire through war.
- First enemies were the **Xiongnu**, fierce nomads from the steppes that would frequently raid Chinese farmlands.
- Early Han emperors tried to buy them off by sending them bribes of silk, rice, alcohol, and money—usually the raids would continue.
- Wudi sent his army to fight the Xiongnu.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ Military campaigns successfully drove the Xiongnu into Central Asia (for the time being)
❖ Attempted to make the NW border safe by settling troops on former Xiongnu pastures
❖ Nomadic tribes would cause more problems later in Chinese history
❖ Wudi also colonized Manchuria and Korea to the NE, as well as farther south, into Vietnam
GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

1. **Place** What was the approximate size, in square miles, of the Han Empire at its greatest extent?

2. **Location** Along which border did the Chinese build the Great Wall? Why did they build it there and not in other places?
Using Geography Skills

1. Place Which geographical areas did both empires include?
2. Location Which empire expanded farther west?

KEY
- Qin empire
- Great Wall in Qin period
- Han empire
- Great Wall in Han period
Chinese Society

Under the Han Dynasty, the structure of Chinese society was clearly defined. At the top was the emperor, who was considered semidivine. Next came kings and governors, both appointed by the emperor. They governed with the help of state officials, nobles, and scholars.

Peasant farmers came next. Their production of food was considered vital to the existence of the empire. Artisans and merchants were below them.

Near the bottom were the soldiers, who guarded the empire's frontiers. At the bottom were enslaved persons, who were usually conquered peoples.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- Han society:
  - Notable because peasants had a higher place in society than many other civilizations- agriculture was seen as the most important and honored profession since there were so many people to feed
  - Merchants were looked down upon- commerce was seen as the least important occupation (in reality it was important to the economic growth of China)
  - Tried to unify the empire through assimilation (making conquered people part of Chinese culture)- sent Chinese farmers to settle newly conquered areas, encouraged them to intermarry with local peoples, and set up Confucian schools
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

Han society:

- Han women mostly led quiet lives at home. Confucian teachings dictated that women were to devote themselves to their families. Still, some women made economic contributions to their families. Upper-class women were more able to pursue education and culture.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- Han government:
  - Accepted the rule of the emperor- believed to have divine authority
  - Relied on a complex **bureaucracy (civil service)** to carry out the work of the government
  - Levied taxes to finance the government- peasants owed part of their yearly crops to the government
  - Peasants also owed a month’s worth of labor or military service every year to build roads, dig canals and irrigation ditches, expand the Great Wall
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- Han government:
  - Civil service filled with highly qualified people that took a rigorous examination (the civil service examination system) to obtain prestigious jobs in China’s bureaucracy
  
  • Wudi favored Confucianism, so the test included Confucian ideals, as well as history, law, and literature.
  
  • In theory, anyone could take the test, but in reality, it was mainly the wealthy landowners that filled the bureaucracy since they could afford to educate their sons.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ Han cultural achievements:
  – Paper was invented in 105 CE (*what are the effects of this?*)
  – Collar harness for horses- allowed horses to pull heavier loads
  – Created a plow with double blades
  – Improved iron tools
  – Invented the wheelbarrow
A re-creation of papermaking during the Han Dynasty
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

- Han economy:
  - Government established **monopolies** on salt, iron, coin minting, and alcohol brewing
  - Government also ran silk mills (competing with private silk weavers)- techniques of silk production became a closely guarded state secret.
  - Commerce expanded along the **Silk Road** and through sea trade routes.
Silk manufacturing was very important during the Han Dynasty!
Map of trade routes that expanded during the Classical Era
The Han Dynasty: Daily Life

- 1 out 10 lived in walled cities that had planned streets and blocks
- Government buildings and trade centers were incorporated into city design
- Poor lived in shanty homes, young men joined gangs and wore identifying clothes and terrorized people
- The rich lived in lavish large decorated homes in secluded areas of the city
- Wealthy wore the nicest and most comfortable clothes
The Han Dynasty: The Merchants and The Craftsmen

- Merchant a successful occupation and rank but it was despised
- Rich and poor despised them because they were not born rich and did not farm the land
- Laws were passed to ban the merchant class from own chariots and horses
The Han Dynasty: Education

- Public schools introduced because believed educated people were key to good government.
- Wealthy went to private schools and taught math, sciences, literature, religion and arts.
- Jobs were given to educated people who received pay for their work.
The Silk Road

- Silk Road, was a major trade route which sold China’s secret commodity (silk)
- Chinese Silk Road connected China to the Roman Empire
- Silk Road was protected by Great Wall
- Employed mandatory military service to maintain empire
Confucianism

- Confucius born 551 B.C. to wealthy family who eventually became poor
- Passionate about learning, believed to be the most educated in China and sought out as a teacher
- Confucianism stresses the need to develop responsibility and moral behavior through rigid rules of behavior
- It stressed a way of behaving, so one will do the right things
Taoism

- Taoism is a philosophy, a way of looking at life and a way of thinking about things.
- Taoists believe if you look at life and think about things in the right way, you'll be much happier.
- Taoists believe it's very important to discover who we are.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ In spite of their advances, the Han had problems:
- Economic imbalance:
  • Chinese custom was for a family’s land to be distributed equally among a father’s male heirs-unless a farmer gained more land, small plots were given to sons.
  • It was difficult to produce food to sell with small plots of land. Small farmers often went into debt-had to borrow from large landowners, who charged high interest rates. If the small farmers couldn’t pay back the loans, the large landowners would take their land.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ In spite of their advances, the Han had problems:
   – Economic imbalance:
     • Large landowners didn’t have to pay taxes. When their land increased, it meant less tax revenue for the government.
     • The government pressed harder to get tax money from the small farmers (who were already strained)
     • Gap between rich and poor widened
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ In spite of their advances, the Han had problems:
  – Political instability: palace intrigue (people would compete for political power), inexperienced emperors
  – Peasant revolts

❖ Wang Mang took the title of emperor for himself and overthrew the Han (ending the first half of the Han dynasty)
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE- 220 CE)

❖ Middle Period (Wang Mang):
- Took land away from rich, tried to redistribute to poor- angered wealthy landowners
- Minted new money- actually disrupted the economy- more people spent money, so merchants raised prices
- 11 CE: A great flood killed thousands, left millions homeless- many went hungry
- Peasants revolted

❖ Wang Mang assassinated in 23 CE
❖ By 25 CE, a member of the old imperial family took the throne and began the Later Han Dynasty.
The Han Dynasty
(202 BCE-220 CE)

❖ Later Han Dynasty (25 CE-220 CE):
  – Economic expansion along the Silk Road
  – Within a century, the same political, economic, and social problems continued to plague the Later Han Dynasty
  – By 220 CE, the Later Han Dynasty broke into 3 rival kingdoms.
Tonight’s WHAP HW

- Finish viewing and taking notes over Classical China (Qin and Han dynasties)
- Finish reading and taking notes over Ch. 3- pp. 141-144 (India)