

# CHINA

Five Thousand Years  
of History & Civilization



City University of Hong Kong Press

# China

## Five Thousand Years of History and Civilization



**Chinese Civilisation Centre**



**City University of Hong Kong Press**

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First published 2007

ISBN: 978-962-937-140-1

Published by

City University of Hong Kong Press  
Tat Chee Avenue  
Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Website: [www.cityu.edu.hk/upress](http://www.cityu.edu.hk/upress)  
E-mail: [upress@cityu.edu.hk](mailto:upress@cityu.edu.hk)

Printed in Hong Kong

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## FOREWORD

The original Chinese edition of this book under the title *Chinese Civilization: A Source Book* 《中国文化导读》 was first published by City University of Hong Kong in 1999 and since then it has been used as the main reference book for students taking the Chinese Civilization courses.

A much-refined second edition was published in 2002 and in January 2007 a simplified Chinese-character version was published in Beijing, opening the door for a wider audience to appreciate the treasures of Chinese culture.

Our main aim throughout has been to allow young people to feast on the ancient wisdom of our forefathers by learning about the pantheon of Chinese civilization. It has taken more than five years to prepare the second edition of this book, upon which this English version is based. I am grateful that I was able to spearhead this project. However, the main credit goes to the excellent authors and editors.

My colleagues and I believe great civilizations belong not only to their direct descendants but to all the people of the world, and we hope this book will be enjoyed by everyone with a general appreciation of Chinese culture as well as by university students in need of a thorough reference book for university-level general education courses.

The team behind this project has noted that great civilizations such as those from China, India and the Islamic world have played a rather muted role on the academic stage in the West. This is partly due to language barriers but also to a historical mindset. It is our wish, then, that by opening the door to an English-language readership, this book can help to redress this imbalance. French, Spanish and other editions are also being planned.

I would like to thank the scholars who have worked so hard to translate this book into English and those who have helped to match its contents to the needs of the English-language readers.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues at City University of Hong Kong and other institutions around the world who have made possible this publication.

H K Chang  
President and University Professor  
City University of Hong Kong  
April 2007



# China

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# A BRIEF CHINESE CHRONOLOGY

夏 Xia Dynasty		c. 2100– c. 1600 BC	
商 Shang Dynasty		c. 1600– c. 1100 BC	
周 Zhou Dynasty	西周 Western Zhou Dynasty	c. 1100– 771 BC	
	东周 Eastern Zhou Dynasty	770–256 BC	
	春秋 Spring and Autumn Period	770–476 BC	
	战国 Warring States	475–221 BC	
秦 Qin Dynasty		221–206 BC	
汉 Han Dynasty	西汉 Western Han	206 BC – AD 24	
	东汉 Eastern Han	25–AD 220	
三国 Three Kingdoms	魏 Wei	220–265	
	蜀汉 Shu Han	221–263	
	西晋 Wu	222–280	
西晋 Western Jin Dynasty		265–316	
东晋 Eastern Jin Dynasty		317–420	
南北朝 Northern and Southern Dynasties	南朝 Southern Dynasties	宋 Song	420–479
		齐 Qi	479–502
		梁 Liang	502–557
		陈 Chen	557–589
	北朝 Northern Dynasties	北魏 Northern Wei	386–534
		东魏 Eastern Wei	534–550

	北齐 Northern Qi	550–577
	西魏 Western Wei	535–556
	北周 Northern Zhou	557–581
隋 Sui Dynasty		581–618
唐 Tang Dynasty		(618–907)
五代 Five Dynasties	后梁 Later Liang	907–923
	后唐 Later Tang	923–936
	后晋 Later Jin	936–946
	后汉 Later Han	947–950
	后周 Later Zhou	951–960
宋 Song Dynasty	北宋 Northern Song Dynasty	960–1127
	南宋 Southern Song Dynasty	1127–1279
辽 Liao Dynasty		916–1125
金 Jin Dynasty		1115–1234
元 Yuan Dynasty		1271–1368
明 Ming Dynasty		1368–1644
清 Qing Dynasty		1644–1911
中华民国成立 Republic of China founded		1911
中华人民共和国成立 People's Republic of China founded		1949

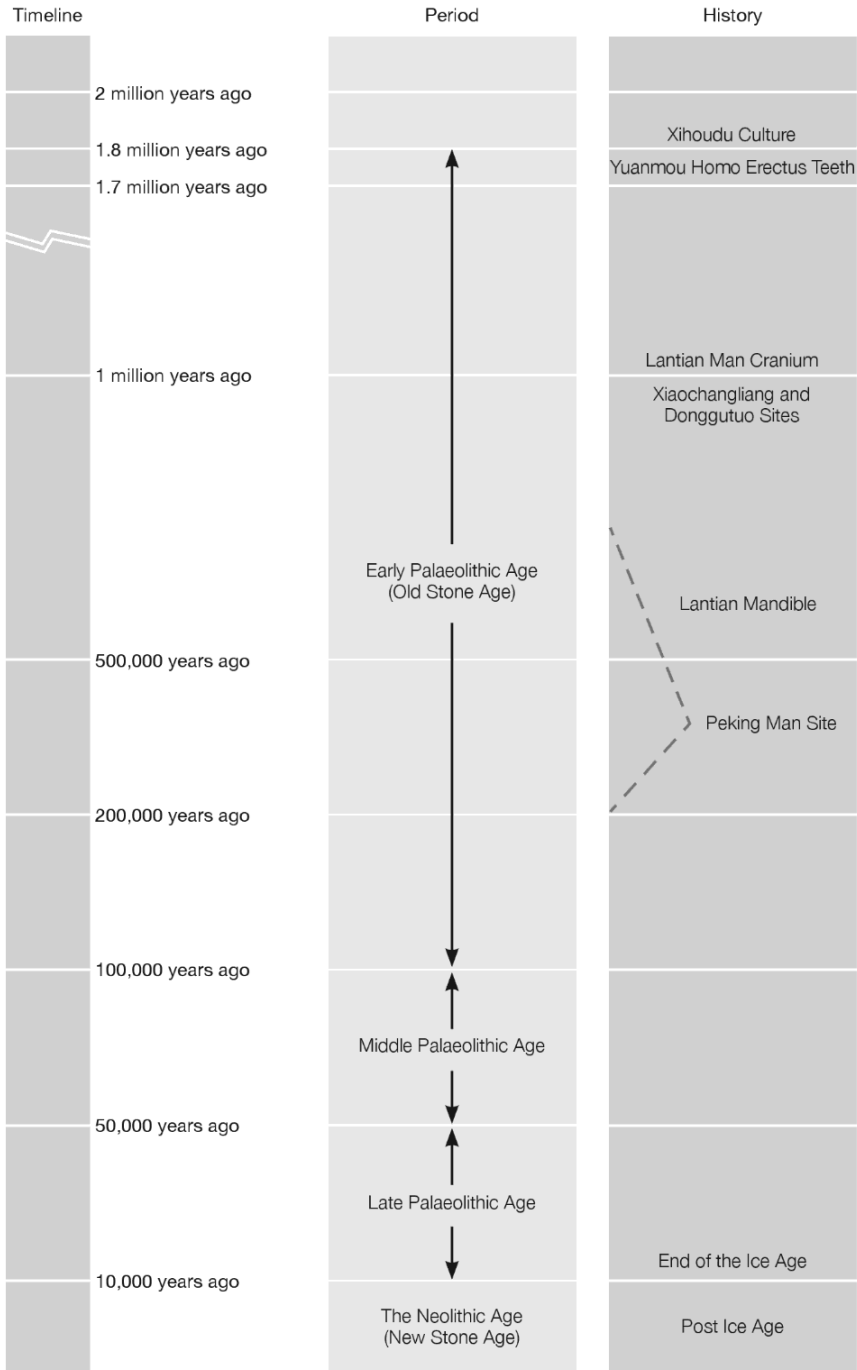


CHAPTER ONE

## THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY OF CHINA

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Free-style calligraphy of “史” (*shǐ*) means “history” in Chinese



## **The Geography of China**

China's geographical location and natural environment have had a significant impact upon the shaping of its civilization.

China is situated in the southeast of the Eurasian Continent, bounded in the west by Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia, and in the east by the Pacific Ocean. Along the coast stretches a vast plain, and in the west lie mountains, plateaus and basins, with rolling mountain ranges from the west to the east. The major ranges are the Altai Mountains, the Tianshan Mountains, the Kunlun Mountains, the Karakoram Mountains, the Gangdise Mountains and the Himalayan Mountains. The Himalayan mountain range, in the southernmost part of the country, is the highest in the world and includes the world's highest peak, Mount Qomolangma.

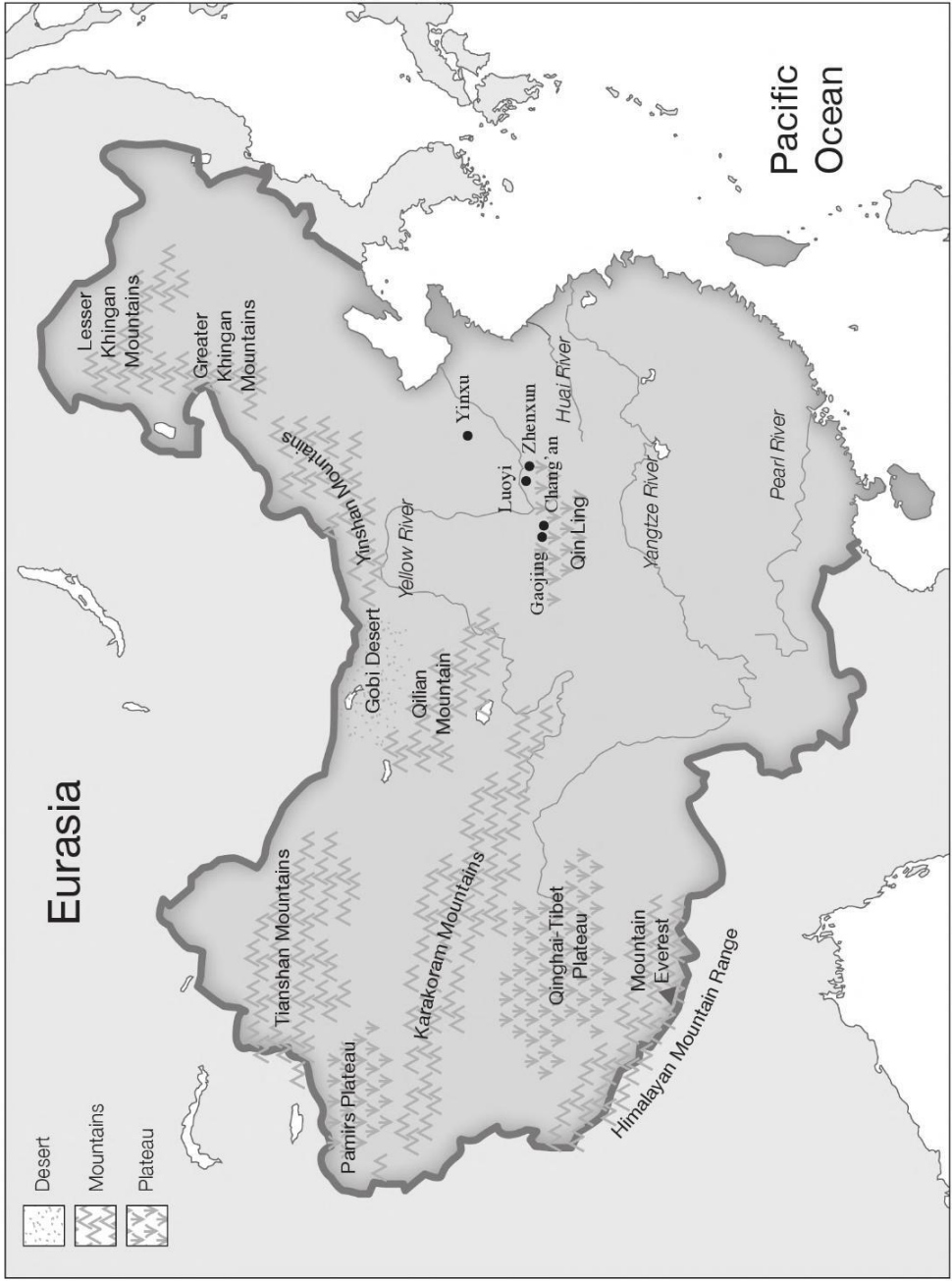
Known as the "Roof of the World," the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the world's largest plateau, is situated in the southwest of China, covering an area of 2.5 million square kilometers. Its northern fringe is bordered by the Kunlun Mountains and the Qilian Mountains and its southern fringe by the Himalayan Mountains. To the northwest of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau lies the famous Pamirs Plateau, which stretches through China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. It, too, is bordered by mountain ranges, including, China's Kunlun and Karakoram Mountains and the mountains of Afghanistan's Hindu Kush.

The forms of transport available in ancient China meant it was almost impossible for people to cross these formidable mountain ranges. As a consequence of this geographical barrier, there was little contact between the East and the West and limited cultural exchange.

In the north of China are the Yinshan Mountains. Further north lies Mongolia's Gobi Desert and the northeast is bordered by the Greater Khingan Mountains, the Lesser Khingan Mountains and the Changbai Mountains. In the east and the southeast zigzags a long coastline, a vast sea area extending to the Pacific, the world's largest ocean. Geographically, China's mainland is guarded by mountains and seas. In this vast and seemingly impregnable country, rich in natural resources our ancestors lived for generations, developing a history and civilization unique to China.

China's terrain slopes from the west to the east, with most rivers running in the same direction. Its two most famous rivers are the Yellow





Map of China with ancient capitals

River and the Yangtze River (Chang Jiang). The Yellow River Valley and the Yangtze River Valley were historically the most economically developed areas throughout Chinese history, and the Yellow River Valley in particular occupied a very important political status in ancient China. Many dynasties established their capitals in this area, for example, Zhenxun in the Xia Dynasty, Yinxu in the Shang Dynasty, Gaojing in the West Zhou Dynasty, Luoyi in the East Zhou Dynasty, Xianyang in the Qin Dynasty, Chang'an in the West Han Dynasty, Luoyang in the East Han, Wei and Jin dynasties, Chang'an and Luoyang in the Sui and Tang dynasties, and Bianliang in the Song Dynasty. Throughout China's history, the Yellow River Valley was the political center for many dynasties.

## The Origin of Ancient Man in China

According to recent archeological findings, the first human-like ancestors appeared around three million years ago.

The earliest human fossils found in China, in the Yuanmou Man site in Yunnan Province and the Xihoudu Site in Shanxi Province's Ruicheng County, date to about one million years ago. Further sites dating to between one million and 100,000 years ago have been discovered across China—Lantian Man in Shaanxi, Peking Man in Zhoukoudian, Yunxian Man in Hubei and Hexian Man in Anhui all caused a great sensation when they were unearthed. The tools discovered in the first two northern sites were mainly coarsely chipped stones; those in the last two southern sites were mainly gravel stones. This difference in tool-making has led some scholars to believe that the earliest “Chinese” in the south and in the north showed distinctive features in their “cultures” from the Palaeolithic Age onwards.

It is probably an aftermath of the Glacial Epoch that there is a missing link between fossils of ancient man in China between 100,000 and 30,000 or 50,000 years ago. It still remains unresolved whether the fossils of *Homo Sapiens*, the direct ancestor of humankind, such as the well-known Upper Cave Man (*Shandingdongren*), evolved from *Homo Erectus*, such as Yuanmou Man or Peking Man or migrated from elsewhere. The latest research by geneticists demonstrates that the ancestors of humankind were more likely to have come from Africa to the south of China some 50,000 to 60,000 years ago, probably via

the Middle East, South Asia and the Southeast Asian Peninsula. Later, people may have gradually migrated to the north of China. In the process of tens of thousands of years of evolution, these new settlers became entrenched in the geographical areas that now constitute modern China and, in the process, created a colorful and exceptional civilization.

Did modern man descend from a common ancestor or originate from different places? This has long been a controversial issue. Even if we agree that modern man could have originated in the Asian landmass, we are still unsure as to whether in the course of over 100,000 years of evolution the aboriginal Chinese have been ethnologically linked with the modern Chinese since the beginning, or whether a drastic change occurred about 30,000 to 50,000 years ago and cut the blood-tie between the earliest settlers and the modern Chinese. All these issues remain to be finally resolved with further data and further research in the future.

## **The Palaeolithic Age in China**

According to archeological dating, the early history of mankind began in the Palaeolithic Age (the Old Stone Age). In China, the Palaeolithic Age dates from about 1,800,000 to 10,000 years ago and can be divided into three periods—early, middle and late. The early period lasted the longest, from about 1,800,000 to 100,000 years ago.

In the Palaeolithic Age, primitive man mainly used simple coarsely chipped stone implements for fruit-collecting and hunting.

Palaeolithic sites have been discovered in a number of regions in China. The following are a few examples.

### **The Xihoudu Site**

The site of the earliest man discovered in China so far is in Xihoudu Village in Ruicheng County, Shanxi Province. A number of stone artefacts has been found, such as core stones, chipped stones and stone implements which include choppers, flakes and three-edged points. As well as stone objects, antlers bearing cut marks, charred animal bones and horse teeth have also been unearthed, together with numerous vertebrate animal fossils. The Xihoudu Site is about 1.8 million years old, which proves that man lived in China at least that long ago.

### **The Yuanmou Man Site**

No human remains have been discovered in the Xihoudu Site. The earliest human remains discovered in China so far are from the Yuanmou Man Site, located at Shangnabang Village in Yuanmou County, Yunnan Province, where two human teeth fossils were unearthed—the right and left upper middle teeth of one human. Also discovered were stone implements, core stones, chipped stones, animal bone chips with marks made by hand, coal scraps, charred animal bones and animal fossils.

### **The Lantian Man Site**

In Lantian County, Shaanxi Province, the fossils and stone implements of Lantian Man have been discovered at two sites—Gongwangling, where a relatively complete human cranium and three teeth were discovered; and Chenjiawo, where a relatively complete lower mandible was discovered. These two locations are collectively known as the Lantian Site. The date of Lantian Man has been calculated several times, and according to information released in 1987, the fossils unearthed in Gongwangling are about 980,000 years old or 1.1 to 1.15 million years old, while those unearthed in Chenjiawo are 530,000 or 650,000 years old.

### **The Peking Man Site**

The renowned Peking Man site is located on top of the Dragon Bone Mountain in Zhoukoudian, southwest of Beijing. This site has been excavated several times and numerous ancient man fossils have been unearthed. Six relatively complete human craniums have been discovered at different times, together with fragments of skulls and the mandibles, shin bones, humeruses, collarbones, ribs and teeth of about forty individuals, as well as tens of thousands of stone implements and stone artefacts. The stone implements include flakes, points, choppers, and carving tools. Also discovered were charred animal bones, stones, Chinese hackleberry seeds and ashes. Peking Man Site has been dated at between 100,000 and 200,000 million years old.

### **The Use of Fire**

In the Palaeolithic Age, primitive man lived in the caves and survived by collecting fruit and hunting. It was a hard life—before the discovery of fire, food obtained by gathering and hunting was eaten raw. The fact that



Peking Man model

ancient man ate raw food is recorded in the Chinese classics. For example, it is recorded in *The Book of Rites*: “in ancient times, our ancestors did not know how to use fire, so they ate the fruits of plants and the flesh of birds and animals with hair on them and drank their blood.” After the discovery of fire, primitive man ate cooked food, which was easily digestible and improved health. In addition to providing cooking fuel, fire was also useful in driving away wild animals and giving light and warmth. Fire played an important role in man’s evolution.

When was fire first used in China? Archeological evidence indicates that it occurred very early in our history. Remains of fire have been discovered in several earlier excavated sites. For example, in the Xihoudu Site, charred animal bones, antlers and horse teeth were discovered; in the Yuanmou Site, a large amount of coal scraps was discovered; in the Lantian Site, coal bits were discovered; in the Peking Man Site, ashes, coal lumps, charred animal bones and stones were discovered. Among all the archeological findings, ashes have been discovered in piles in several sites. Obviously, Peking Man knew not only how to use fire, but also how to manage fire to prevent it from spreading. These few examples of the use of fire by ancient man are sufficient to demonstrate its long history in ancient China—perhaps around 1.7 to 1.8 million years from the time of the Xihoudu Site or from the Lantian Man Site.

## ❧ The Neolithic Age in China ❧

The Neolithic Age (the New Stone Age) lasted from 6000 BC (or earlier) to 2000 BC. (between 3500 and 2000 BC, when both bronze and stone were used). Three main features mark the Neolithic Age—the use of ground stone implements, the invention of pottery, and the appearance of agriculture. Neolithic Age ruins have been discovered in more than six thousand sites in China, in particular the sites associated with Cishan, Peiligang, Yangshao and Longshan Cultures.

## Cishan and Peiligang Culture

Evidence of Cishan Culture was discovered in Cishan in Wu'an County, Hebei Province, in 1973. Many relics from the Neolithic Age have been unearthed here—pottery, stone implements and bone implements, as well as numerous ash and cellar pits, where carbonized ashes of grain seeds that have effloresced over thousands of years. Cishan Culture lasted from 6000 BC to 5000 BC.

The Peiligang Culture site was discovered in Peilonggang in Xinzheng County, Henan Province, in 1977. The site corresponds to the Cishan site in both time and archeological finds.

The tools of production unearthed in the Cishan and Peiligang Culture sites are mostly ground stone implements, including stone shovels, stone hammers, stone adzes and stone sickles. The bone implements unearthed, such as bone arrowheads and harpoons with inverted spikes, were mostly used for fishing and hunting.

The many examples of pottery unearthed in the above sites are of coarse quality, being hand-made, with clay pieces layered one on top of another. They are mostly cooking utensils, including oval jars, pots, small-mouthed kettles with two ears, bowls, small basins and cauldrons.

The remains of domesticated pigs, dogs and chickens that have also been discovered in the Cishan and Peiligang sites show that livestock breeding played an important role in life at that time.

## Yangshao Culture

Yangshao Culture, typical of the middle Neolithic Age, was first discovered in Yangshao Village in Mianchi County, Henan Province, in 1931. The famous three-layered cultural sites were discovered at Hougang, Gaolouzhuang, in Anyang, Henan Province. The Yangshao Culture site was unearthed at the bottom layer, the Longshan site in the middle and the Xiaotun site (belonging to the Shang civilization era) at the top, allowing archeologists to determine the date of Yangshao Culture and its relationship with Longshan Culture. Over the past fifty years, nearly a thousand sites representing Yangshao Culture have been discovered over the Central Shaanxi Plain, mostly in Henan Province, the south of Shanxi Province, the north of Hebei Province, and up to Gansu Province, Qinghai Province and the Great Bend of the Yellow River. The exact date of Yangshao Culture is 5000 BC to 3000 BC, and in some places as late as 2400 BC.



Some Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites in China

The sites show that crops cultivated during the Yangshao Culture period were dry crops, mainly millet and broomcorn millet, hence the name “Millet Culture.” Livestock included pigs, dogs, chickens and oxen. Stone shovels (to turn over earth), legged sickles (to harvest crops), stone hammers, stone adzes, fishing lances, fishing hooks, net hanging objects, bows and arrows and stone balls were also in use at this time. The stone shovels and legged sickles of the late period were thin and polished all over. Arrowheads were made of bones, stones and horns and one type of arrowhead had inverted spikes, which made for a very effective killing tool.

Yangshao Culture also saw the introduction of primitive spinning and weaving, with mat patterns and cloth patterns used to decorate pottery artefacts. Bone awls, bone needles, spinning tools and weaving tools have also been discovered. Most of the spinning wheels are made of pottery, and the rest are made of stone.

The pottery of Yangshao Culture belongs to the primitive hand-made stage, with rather advanced texture, design, decoration and baking skills. The so-called painted pottery is the most famous, with the early

artefacts featuring red clay and black paint. Some of the late painted pottery artefacts were dressed with a layer of clay, that is, a layer of light yellow, white and red clay on the surface before they were painted with color. Some of them already had double-color designs, including decorative patterns of fish, deer, frogs, birds, flowers and leaves, and were used for cooking, containing water, serving food and storage.

Comparatively large villages appeared during the Yangshao Culture period; the most complete village site discovered to date is the Jiangzai site in Lingtong, Shaanxi Province.

### **Longshan Culture**

Longshan Culture was typical of the late Neolithic Age. Discovered in 1928 when the remains of the Chengziya site at Longshan, Zhangqiu County near Jinan, Shandong Province were being excavated, Longshan Culture dates from 2400 BC to 1900 BC. As far as Shandong Province is concerned, Dawenkou Culture (4300 BC–2400 BC) predates Longshan Culture and was the basis for it.

In Longshan Culture, domesticated crops included not only millet, but also rice. Domesticated livestock included pigs, dog, cattle, sheep and chicken. The tools of agricultural production included flat-drilled stone shovels, clam shovels and teathed clam sickles. The appearance of such manufacturing tools as adzes and chisels shows that the wood-manufacturing industry was well developed at that time.

The production of Longshan ceramics was already relatively sophisticated at this time. The most elaborate pottery was black pottery with eggshell thin outer walls, and the white pottery represented by the White Pottery Cooker with three hollow feet.

From the site of Longshan Culture have been unearthed some delicate jade ware, such as jade shovels, jade adzes with impressed animal face patterns, and bird-shaped jade pendants. These items show that the jade carving industry was also advanced. And two pieces of brass awls unearthed from the Longshan Culture site prove that bronze was being smelted at that time.

At the Chengziya site where Longshan Culture was discovered, a city wall of stamped earth, 450 meters in length from north to south and 390 meters in width from east to west, was excavated. This is significant to the study of social developments of the late Longshan Culture.



## ❧ Primitive Agriculture and Handicraft ❧

In the Neolithic Age, a key element of social development was the evolution of a productive economy, which involved agriculture, livestock breeding and such handicrafts as pottery making, spinning and weaving.

Prior to the productive economy, the food available was wild animals, fish and wild plants. All products were natural. The stone or wood artifacts made at the time were tools that assisted man in hunting and gathering food from the natural world. The developing productive economy, on the other hand, saw man introduce crops and animals which could be farmed and the subsequent increasing importance of agriculture.

### Livestock Breeding

How livestock breeding emerged is a question that remains to be resolved through further archeological research. However, the development of more settled communities due to the increasing use of farmed crops certainly promoted the development of livestock breeding.

The earliest animals to be domesticated were pigs, dogs and chickens, with cattle being introduced later. Pigs were the most prolific



A can with domesticated animal pattern  
(Hemudu Culture)

early domesticated animals; pig bones found at the Zengpiyan site in Guilin, Guangxi Province, have been identified as the bones of domesticated pigs. This site dates from 8000 BC to 7000 BC, making the pig bones found the earliest evidence of domesticated pigs in China. Many animal skeletons discovered at the Cishan site in Wu'an, Anhui Province, dated back about seven thousand or eight thousand years. The skeletons of domesticated dogs and chickens discovered there were the earliest in China. All of which is proof that domesticated animals were bred from a very early date in China.

### **The Emergence of Agriculture**

China is not only a country with a long history of agricultural production but one in which agriculture has always played an important role. Although the exact time of the emergence of agriculture in China is still a matter for debate, continuing archeological excavations at a number of sites of early agricultural production have shed new light on this puzzle.

At an ancient site at Goose Feather Pass in Huairan County, Shanxi Province, the relics unearthed were mainly stone implements, including three stone sickles and many stone hoes, which indicate that they were tools used for agricultural production. Archeologists excavating at the Yuchanyan Cave in Baishizhai Village in Shouyan Town of Daoshou County, Hunan Province, found two rice shells as they sieved through the layers of soil. Both these sites date back to around ten thousand years. The discovery of the rice remains in the Yuchanyan Cave places rice planting in China as early as ten thousand years ago and provides important evidence in the study of the origin of rice.

Other, perhaps later, sites where rice was unearthed include the Jiahu site in Wuyang County, Henan Province, where traces of rice shells and many carbonized rice seeds were found in the red-baked clay pieces and the Pengtoushan site in Li County, Hunan Province, where carbonized rice shells and rice seeds were found mingled in the pottery pieces. These sites date back some eight thousand years. At the Bashiqiang site in Mengxi, Li County, Hunan Province, numerous rice seeds dating back eight thousand to nine thousand years ago were also found.

Based on the above discoveries, the earliest indication of the emergence of agricultural communities in China is around ten thousand years ago.

The above sites, though early in terms of the time scale, did not yield large numbers of relics of agricultural products. Other archeological sites about seven thousand years old have yielded more remains that demonstrate the level of agricultural production at the time. These sites are located in the valleys of the Yangtze River and the Yellow River, such as the Hemudu site in Yuyao County, Zhejiang Province and the Luojiajiao site in Tong County, Zhejiang Province. Many relics have been unearthed at the Hemudu site, including spade-shaped bone tools used for farming. A noteworthy discovery was well-preserved rice seeds, some of which were mixed with rice stalks, rice leaves and rice shells in piles of up to twenty to fifty centimeters in height. Rice seeds and shells amalgamated in pottery shards were also discovered at the Luojiajiao site, clear evidence that rice shells were mixed in the material to make pottery. Both the Hemudu site and the Luojiajiao site are about seven thousand years old.

In the valley of the Yellow River are many archeological sites that reveal that agricultural production was widespread in ancient times. Among the tools of agricultural production unearthed at the Peiligang site were stone sickles, stone hammers and stone shovels. Grain-processing tools, for example, millstones and mill-sticks, show that some grain-processing methods were already known at the time.

At the Cishan site in Wu'an County, Heibei Province, stone shovels, stone hammers, millstones and mill-sticks were unearthed, along with several rectangular pits, one to two meters in average depth and over

five meters in depth in the deepest pit, designed for storing grain. Over three hundred pits have been discovered, eighty of which have piles of rotten grain in varying thickness (about 0.32 meters thick in average) and ten of which have piles of rotten grain up to two meters thick. The thickness results from the rotting of the grains, which would have been piled much higher at the time. According to the sample analysis, the grains was millet. Both sites are around seven thousand years old.



Stone shovels with 3 small holes  
(Neolithic Age)

The above four sites were contemporary, that is, they were all about seven thousand years old. The fact that a series of production tools were employed to process grain and to store a large quantity of grain shows that agricultural production at the time was well under way.

### **The Growth of Handicrafts**

In ancient China, handicrafts were well developed and many trades appeared at different times (for example, the making of artefacts from stone, pottery, bones, wood, jade and bronze, plus textile and weaving implements). According to archeological evidence, stone artefacts were the first to be produced.

China has a long history of silk production; it was the first place in the world to domesticate silkworms and to weave silk. Archeological excavations at the Qianshanyang site in Wuxing (the present-day Huzhou), Zhejiang Province, unearthed a number of silk and hemp products. Among the silk products were fine silk, silk ribbons and silk thread; among the hemp products were pieces of hemp cloth, hemp ropes and hemp rope ties. Most of the silk and hemp products, which were stored in a bamboo basket at the time they were unearthed, are about 5,000 years old. The fine silk pieces had not been carbonized when they were unearthed. The delicate products prove that silk weaving was a well developed handicraft on China's mainland five thousand years ago.

### **Primitive Residence**

The development of a productive economy not only changed the shape of the social economy but also improved the living conditions of the people at the time. For example, the emergence of agricultural production increased the food resources and encouraged people to settle in one place in order to engage in farming. As the result, there came about a marked change in social life—people migrated from caves to live on the plains. Aside from agricultural production, which included the breeding of livestock, the development of pottery making, spinning, weaving and welding encouraged people to settle on the plains.

In order to live on the plains, however, people needed to learn how to build shelters. According to archeological discoveries, many housing sites in the Neolithic Age varied in shape, with semi-caved and flat-built shelters. Among the flat-built shelters, there were square-shaped, round-shaped, single-roomed and double-roomed shelters, and even multi-

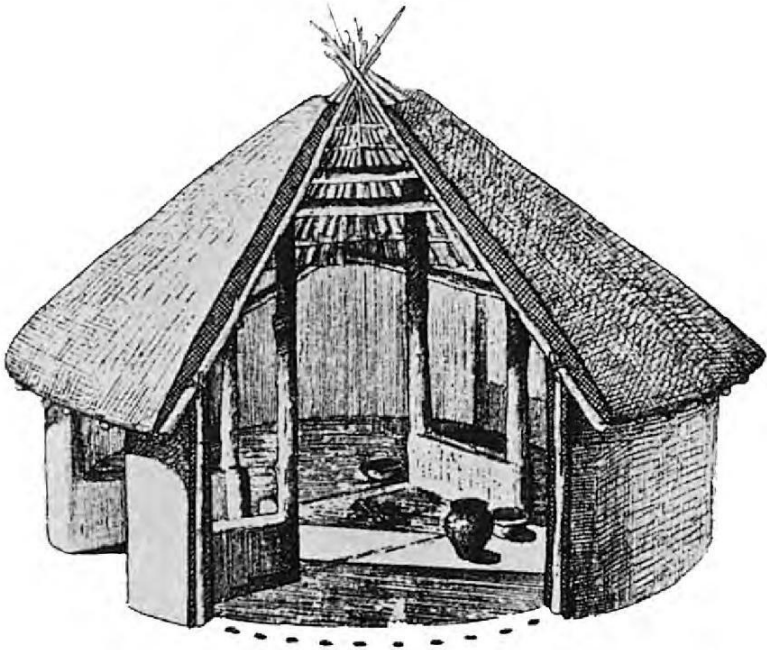


Diagram showing a primitive residence  
(Yangshao Culture)

roomed shelters. Shelters with four adjoining rooms were discovered at the Dahezhuang site in Zhengzhou, Henan Province and at the Dianjiangtai site in Rongyang, Henan Province. Some of the housing sites were obviously well designed, with living quarters, burial areas and kilns for handicraft activities. Villages like these have been discovered at the Jiangzhai site in Lintong, Shaanxi Province, the Banpo site in Xi'an and the Beishouling site in Baoji. It can be seen from these villages that people at the time were living in an organized society.

### ❁ The Development of Primitive Clan Society ❁

In order to survive in the inhospitable environment of the time, ancient man lived in groups from the very beginning. The human fossils of over forty individuals and their remains found in the cave sites of Peking Man show clearly how people lived thousands of years ago.

Around 20,000 or 30,000 years ago, prehistoric China entered

the period of clan society. The Upper Cave Man, discovered in the Longgu Mountains of Zhoukoudian, to the southwest of Beijing, is a representative site of early clan society in China. It is about 18,000 years old. From evidence excavated, it can be concluded that our ancient ancestors had already formed relatively fixed groups through blood ties—that is, clans. Members of the same clan had common ancestors. During the early period, intermarriage of close relatives was banned because of the risk of inbreeding, while a comparatively fixed marriage relationship was gradually established between different clans. The emergence of the clan system marked the beginning of human social organizations.

Many prehistoric sites belonging to the period of clan society have been found in China. Owing to the different locations and levels of development, the cultural sites in the north and the south of China reflect different social and cultural states. However, generally speaking, as time went by, the clan organization became more sophisticated. Thus, the slow evolution of human society from barbarism to civilization is a common phenomenon.

The middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River provide good examples of the process of social evolution. Many of our ancestors' gathering places have been discovered at the sites of Yangshao Culture, which date back about seven thousand to five thousand years. The Banpo clan village site near Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, for example, caused a stir when it was unearthed. An examination of its remains reveals that the people at the time did settle in one place, and built public places and public graveyards in addition to living quarters for clan members. Social organization was relatively sophisticated, but there were no signs of the division between wealth and poverty. Members of the clan were equal—they worked together and ate together.

At the sites of the mid and late Dawenkou Culture in Shandong Province, marked evidence of social polarization between rich and poor appeared. Wealth gradually went into the hands of a few people. In the graveyard of the clan, a rather luxurious tomb of the time was unearthed, in which a hundred pieces of burial jade wares were found. In the four smaller tombs in the same graveyard, only a dozen simple pottery pieces were buried. The polarization between the rich and the poor marked the different social strata of clan members.

Archeological discoveries indicate that big gathering places appeared during this period and that social organization became increasingly

sophisticated. The nature of these villages has been a hot topic of discussion. The tribal theory and the clan theory, for example, involve the stages of developing social organization. It can be seen that some of these villages were similar to the early cities, with the distinctive features of military defence. War became part of man's struggle for survival.

Pillaging wars accelerated the speed of social polarization and led to the gradual change of social organization. In order to strengthen themselves, many clans began to unite into tribes. Along with the acceleration of wars, many tribes began to form alliances according to blood ties and geographical locations. Military tribal chiefs became part of the former social organization system. Although the centralization of power was still restricted, the principles of the former primitive democratic system were gradually broken up and a new political order was gradually established. Chinese society gradually began to form into states.



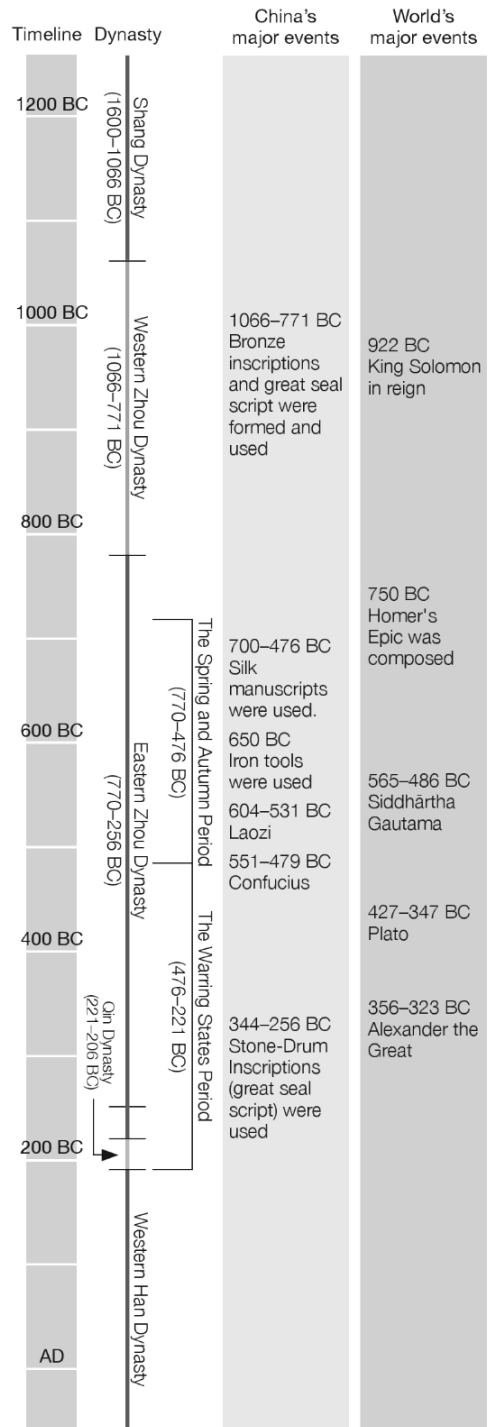
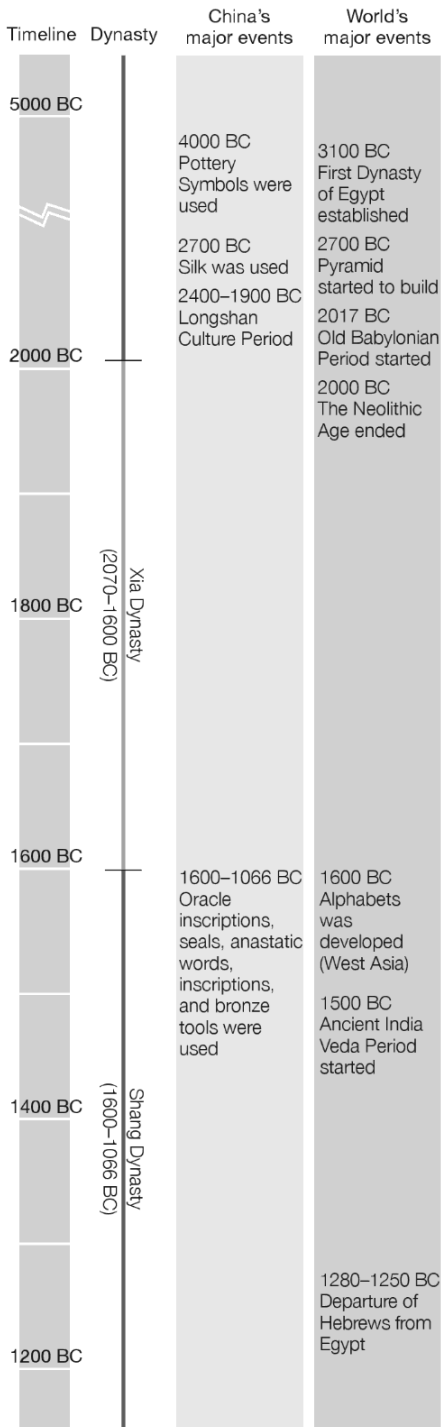
CHAPTER TWO

**ANCIENT CHINA**

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Free-style calligraphy of “史” (*shǐ*) means “history” in Chinese





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## Legendary Ancient China

### The Origins of Chinese Civilization

Although it is not a new claim that China has enjoyed five thousand years of civilization, it is only recently that it has been substantiated. Until now, many scholars, especially historians in the West, would only accept the claim that Chinese civilization originated in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, or in the Xia Dynasty at the earliest.

With Neolithic Age cultural sites being continuously excavated, the belief that Chinese civilization originated in prehistoric times has gained wide acceptance. As early as the late Neolithic Longshan Culture period, there emerged indications of a developing civilization, such as primitive agriculture, bronze-casting, pottery and jade handicraft, cities, large sacrificial sites and an eruption of writing. Cultural sites typical of ancient state organizations and central authority have also been discovered, such as central villages, early cities and big sacrificial sites. As a result, the majority of scholars now recognize that ancient China was on the threshold of civilization about four thousand years ago. Some optimistic scholars even believe that the origins of Chinese civilization date back five thousand years, or even earlier. According to the archeological evidence available now, however, the origins of primitive agriculture, discovered at the Yangshao cultural site date back between seven thousand to five thousand years; vivid inscriptions unearthed at the Dawenkou and other cultural sites in Shandong Province date back six thousand years; and a large number of elaborate jade wares and sacrificial altars, dating back six thousand years, have been excavated at the Hongshan and Liangzhu cultural sites.

The discovery of numerous Neolithic archeological cultural sites across the country sheds new light on our understanding of early Chinese civilization. We used to be influenced by the theory of the Central Plains as the center of Chinese civilization and believed that Chinese civilization had a monistic origin, that is, that the Yellow River is the cradle of Chinese civilization. For a long period of time, from the discovery of Yangshao Culture to the excavation of Longshan Culture, archeological evidence has virtually reinforced this belief. With full-scale archeological work under way, came the spectacular discovery of numerous Neolithic cultural sites from the Yellow River valley to the Yangtze River valley, down to the Pearl River valley and up to the Liao

River valley. The cultural contrast revealed by each site is particularly striking. For example, jade ware discovered in the Hongshan and Liangzhu cultural sites did not exist on the Central Plains and their sacrificial altars and temples were far superior to those of the Central Plains. This helps prove that the sites were developed independently, and their unique and colorful contents demonstrate that there existed more than one cultural circle at that time. Prehistoric Chinese civilization exhibits diverse origins. Archeologists defined the sites in different places with different cultural implications as different districts and put forward a district theory of cultural development.

Denying the monistic origin of civilization and proposing the pluralistic theory are significant to the research of the origins of Chinese civilization in recent years. However, sprouting of civilization is not the same as the birth of civilization. Although each cultural district reveals a rough outline of its civilization, compared to the long history of China, no matter where they were, in the northeast, in the southeast or in any other areas, none of them developed into a dynasty or shaped the general course of Chinese history as did the settlements in the Central Plains, in spite of the fact that they preserved their unique cultural features. In contrast, the other areas beyond the Central Plains evolved into a civilized society much later. The sprout of early civilization did not grow to be a big tree. As it happened, only the Central Plains settlements, assimilating civilization in various areas, took advantage of the richly endowed geographical conditions and pioneered the transition from prehistory to civilized society.

### **Legendary Ancient China**

The Chinese classics recorded many ancient Chinese legends. For example, Youchao people learned to build shelters using trees; Sui ren people used fire by drilling wood; Fuxi people used ropes to make fishing nets; Shennong people planted five kinds of grains and tested hundreds of medicinal herbs; and there were three emperors and five kings. Throughout the years, these legends have become to be regarded as being historical events by the Chinese people.

These ancient legends are obviously mixed with many bizarre myths and stories. Although they are not entirely convincing, such stories handed down from generation to generation nevertheless do contain some nuggets of truth about the lives of our ancient ancestors. When we

return to recent archeological finds to examine these legends, we should pay special regard to their contents. For instance, in regard to the origins of civilization, new ideas might be generated by reading stories about the Yellow Emperor, the Yan Emperor and Yao, Shun and Yu.

### **The Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor**

The legendary Yellow Emperor was a famous tribal chief who lived on the Central Plains about five thousand years ago. To the south and west lived the tribes of Chiyou and the Yan Emperor. According to legend, in order to seize more land, the Yellow Emperor fought and won two major wars against each of them. Thereafter, the tribes of the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor formed a confederation and became the strongest and the steadiest political power on the Central Plains and its surrounding areas for a long period of time. Following the years of discord, the establishment of this impressive tribal alliance is considered to be an epoch-making event in the history of ancient China. The Yellow Emperor era is related to many civil inventions, such as Cangjie's invention of writing. At the time when Sima Qian wrote *The Records of the Historian*, the Yellow Emperor era was recognized as the official beginning of Chinese history, the Yellow Emperor being the first monarch in ancient China. In the Spring and Autumn Period at the latest, the ethnic groups, still in the evolutionary course of the Chinese nation, boasted themselves as the descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor to facilitate assimilation.

Moreover, when scholars discussed the legends several decades ago concerning the Yellow Emperor and others, they concluded that early Chinese culture did not develop from a monistic origin. The Yellow Emperor, the Yan Emperor and Chiyou are more likely to have represented three different kinds of ancient culture, which coincides with the cultural district theory based on modern archeological findings. The legends, thus, are a reflection of historical truth. The "Five Kings" era which began with the Yellow Emperor saw the development of civilization and the evolution of an early state. This is worth further exploration.

### **Yao, Shun and Yu**

Yao, Shun and Yu are household names in China. The most well-known story about them is the legend of their succession to the throne because of their virtue and achievements. The three best-known figures after the

Yellow Emperor, they became the chiefs of the tribal confederation in the Yellow River valley on account of their noble virtues and outstanding achievements. What is notable is that they passed their thrones to people of virtue, rather than to their sons. This was extraordinary in a tribal society where kinship was a critical element. Nevertheless, what is more noteworthy is that if succession by virtue did in fact exist, it reflects a form of political transition in ancient China—that is, the bases of political organizations started to transform from pure kinship organizations into geographical regions. Within the enlarged political entity, various tribes had to form new political and military alliances, which were in fact close to being early states. If this was the case, the Yao and Shun era should be regarded as the dawn of civilization in Chinese society. Since there are many other reasons for regarding the Xia Dynasty as marking the dawn of civilized society, for the reasons above the eras of Yao from the Taotang clan and Shun from the Yu clan should also be seen as being at the threshold of civilization in China.

This understanding matches exactly with the belief that Chinese civilization dates back four thousand years. In archeological terms, the late Longshan Culture occurred roughly at the same time as the legendary Yao and Shun era. Reconsidering the legends of Yao, Shun and Yu from the perspective of archeology, we can draw the conclusion that the succession story might have reflected the exploration and practice of our ancient ancestors in building a civilized society.

## Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties

Xia, Shang and Zhou are the three earliest dynasties in Chinese history, still in the early stages of the country's development. The Zhou Dynasty can be divided into the Western Zhou and the Eastern Zhou dynasties. The history of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty will be introduced in the next section.

### **In Search of the Xia Civilization**

According to ancient classics, the Xia Dynasty, the first dynasty in Chinese history emerged approximately in the 2100 BC.

There is no historical doubt that the Xia Dynasty existed. In fact, in the eyes of many people, the establishment of the Xia Dynasty marked the beginning of civilization in Chinese society. The word “Xia” was

interpreted as “Elegance” by the ancient people, with the figurative meaning of “Civilization.”

In the twentieth century, many historians were skeptical about the details of the past recorded in the Chinese classics. With no archeological data or written documents to prove otherwise, they suspected that the history of the Xia Dynasty was based on legends, rather than on fact.

It is known that a number of written records about the Xia Dynasty appeared in the classics during the pre-Qin period and in the Western and Eastern Han dynasties. Furthermore, each time the Xia Dynasty was mentioned, it was linked with the Shang and Zhou dynasties in the phrase “the three dynasties.” Of the records of “the three dynasties” in ancient literature, the history of the Shang and Zhou dynasties has been confirmed by archeological excavations. It therefore seems unlikely that the recorded history of the Xia Dynasty is sheer fable. In addition, Sima Qian related the history of the Xia Dynasty in a way quite different from the legendary history, by clearly tracing the heredity of Yu the Great to the tyrant Jie. Considering that the reliability of *The Records of the Historian* in recording the hereditary system of the Shang Dynasty has been confirmed by the oracle inscriptions, and the history of the Zhou Dynasty reveals nothing to be skeptical about, there is no reason to suspect that the same book could have fabricated the history of the Xia Dynasty.

Of course, the best way to prove that the Xia Dynasty did exist is to look for archeological evidence. Over the decades, Chinese archeologists have put a lot of effort into fulfilling this task. Since the 1950s, guided by clues about the capital of the Xia Dynasty, they have discovered several cultural sites contemporary with the Xia Dynasty in the present Luoyang in Henan Province and in the south of Shanxi Province. The Erlitou site in Yanshi in Henan Province and the Dongxiama site in Xia County in Shanxi Province are the most important of these sites. The lower layer of the Erlitou site, in particular, happens to date exactly between 2000 BC to 1600 BC, coinciding with the chronicle of the Xia Dynasty. A number of scholars now believe that the discovery of the Erlitou site provides enough proof for the existence of the Xia Dynasty.

Since no written records pertaining to this period have been unearthed so far, the exploration of the Xia civilization is far from complete. Despite the fact that the Erlitou site coincides with the Xia Dynasty in time, the question remains whether it contains the remains of the Xia civilization or the remains of another culture from the same period— perhaps the pre-Shang culture.

## An Outline of the History of the Xia Dynasty

Although archeological evidence is yet to be excavated, the existence of the Xia Dynasty should not be doubted. According to the chronological table released by the “Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dating Project”, the Xia Dynasty commenced in 2070 BC.

Xia was the name of a tribal confederation with Si as their surname, who lived in the areas from Songshan to Yishui and Luoshui of Henan Province and in the south of Shanxi, according to ancient records which called them Xiahou. After the establishment of the Xia Dynasty, Xia was adopted as the name of the dynasty.

It is said that after the death of Yu, his son Qi launched a war against Yi, who was the chosen successor of Yu, to contend for the throne. In the end, Qi killed Yi and won the war, then took his father’s place and became the new ruler. From then on, the hereditary system of the throne replaced succession by virtue.

When Qi came to power, it marked the official establishment of the Xia Dynasty. As recorded by the ancient history book *Bamboo Annals*, the Xia Dynasty, counting from Yu, had seventeen kings within 471 years, with father passing the throne to a son or to a brother in a system of succession.

Ancient legends tell us that Yu built many major cities, appointed officials, set up administrative posts and introduced the earliest criminal law. He also, in the course of attempting to prevent flooding, formulated the policy of tribute. It is reasonable to say that Xia began to evolve towards the early country model in the time of Yu. According to the ancient classics, after the Xia Dynasty was established, it took such measures as building up an army, setting up prisons, and mapping out a calendar to further improve the administration of the region.

As the first dynasty in the history of China, the country system of the Xia Dynasty still belongs to the primitive model of a country. With the Xia Dynasty as the central authority, there existed a number of relatively independent political groups in its surrounding areas. Some of these were also evolving towards the primitive country model. These political powers either submitted themselves to the rule of Xia, or revolted against Xia. To make matters worse, they kept swapping between these two positions. As a result, the Xia Dynasty did not enjoy a consolidated sovereignty. The same situation was true of the following Shang Dynasty and even the early Western Zhou Dynasty. The early

dynasties did not realize “centralized power” as the subsequent Qin Dynasty did. The relationship between those early dynasties and their surrounding domains or other political powers might well be said to have been built on a kind of “confederation,” which, in fact, reflects the features of the transition from a primitive tribal society to a country.

Ancient writings record that since the time of Taikang, son of Qi, the Xia Dynasty suffered internal conflict and external threats. The sovereignty of Xia in the reign of Taikang was taken over by Yi, the chief of the Youqiong clan from the eastern tribes, and his follower Hanzhuo. In the following decades, the Xia Dynasty remained a nominal state. It was not until the reign of Shaokang that Xia managed to regain its power. In the reign of Zhu, son of Shaokang, the various tribes in the east became subjects of Xia and this period is regarded as the most powerful and prosperous period of the Xia Dynasty.

Social upheavals intensified in the late Xia Dynasty. In the 1600 BC, Jie was in power. A notorious tyrant, his behavior caused people to openly defy him and plot to bring about his downfall. The Xia Dynasty was coming to an end.

When the Xia Dynasty was beset with crisis, the Shang tribe in the east, led by its chief Tang, took advantage of this opportunity to revolt against Jie. Jie was defeated and the Xia Dynasty collapsed.

### **The Rise of Shang and the Downfall of the Xia Dynasty**

The Shang was an old tribe from the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. The tribe’s surname was Zi and its ancestor was Qi, who is said to have been an official in charge of water control projects for Yu in the Xia Dynasty, when Shang was one of the tribes that submitted to the Xia Dynasty.

The Shang people migrated frequently from Qi to the Shang Dynasty when it was established by Tang. It is said that there were as many as eight major migratory periods, although the areas of which they moved were confined to the present Henan and Shandong provinces. The legend is that Xiang Tu and Wang Hai, the most famous ancestors of the Shang people, made great contributions to the development of the Shang tribe.

Towards the end of the Xia Dynasty, the Shang tribe gradually prospered. Their chief, Tang, taking advantage of the upheaval in the Xia Dynasty, wiped out or subdued quite a few small domains and tribes in the east. It is said that after eleven expeditions, Tang finally dominated



the area and launched a war against the Xia Dynasty. He fought a battle in Mingtiao (near the present Kaifeng in Henan Province) against Jie, defeated him and overthrew the Xia Dynasty.

Tang overthrew Xia and established the Shang Dynasty at approximately 1600 BC. He is said to have built his capital at Bo (the present Shangqiu in Henan Province), although some historians believe that the capital was Xibo (the present Yanshi in Henan Province). Over seventeen generations, thirty one Shang kings sat on the throne. The hereditary system of the Shang Dynasty mainly involved passing the throne to a brother in the beginning, then to a son in the late Shang period.

### **From the Time when Pangeng Moved the Capital to Yin to the Collapse of the Shang Dynasty**

After Tang established the Shang Dynasty, the Shang tribe moved its capital five times. When Pangeng was in reign, he settled the Shang capital at Yin (the present Anyang in Henan Province) at about 1300 BC. It remained there until the collapse of the Shang Dynasty more than two hundred years later. Consequently, the Shang Dynasty, after Pangeng moved its capital to Yin, was called Yin.

The sovereignty of the Shang Dynasty was consolidated after Pangeng moved its capital to Yin. Great progress was made both in politics and in economics. During the several decades of Wu Ding's reign, the country reached the peak of its power. Wu Ding launched many campaigns against neighboring tribes and greatly expanded his territory. According to *The Book of Poetry*, the Shang Dynasty in the time of Wu Ding was able to govern directly an area as large as thousands of "li" (a traditional Chinese unit of distance, equivalent to about five hundred meters) around, while its influence could reach "the four seas," a remote place in the eyes of the ancient people.

When Wu Ding's reign came to a close, the Shang Dynasty began to decline. At the time of King Zhou, his brutal rule led to the intensification of social conflicts and the increasing contention within the ruling class. In order to maintain superior authority, King Zhou had his loyal ministers, such as Bigan, Weizi and Qizi, killed or expelled and trusted other cruel ministers, which severely undermined his own power. Seizing this opportunity, some small domains broke away from Shang and joined forces with the rising Zhou tribe. This changed the balance of

power between Shang and Zhou and, thus, it was only a matter of time before Shang was overthrown by Zhou.

### **Political Institutions in the Shang Dynasty**

Thanks to the discovery of the oracle inscriptions, the history of the Shang Dynasty, in contrast with the Xia Dynasty, is more easily traceable and verifiable.

Differing from the political institutions of the later dynasties, there existed many obvious primitive tribal elements in the political institutions of the Shang Dynasty. As a country, it was still in the primitive stage. The Shang kingdom was mainly made up of two parts: one was the internally governed area with the Shang king as the central ruling authority; the other included the external areas, which, although under the king's influence were not under his direct control. He had to appoint officials or employ the original chiefs of the domains to govern on his behalf. In addition to the subdued external areas, there were other domains where the Shang government was not truly effective and they remained dependent only in name. Thus, the political patterns of the Shang Dynasty consisted in the strict ruling of the internally governed areas and relatively loose governing of the externally subdued domains. Within the internally governed areas, a hundred officials were appointed to form the central institutions; in the externally subdued domains, officials equivalent to dukes and marquis were in power. They were subject to the Shang king in name only and were so independent that they became lords in their respective areas.

### **The Early History of the Zhou Tribe**

The Zhou tribe, whose surname was Ji, rose from the loess plateau in the middle reaches of the Wei River and claimed to be the descendants of Houji, surnamed Qi, who was good at planting crops and was appointed Minister of Agriculture in the time of Shun. This supports the view that the Zhou tribe adopted agriculture as a way of living from the very beginning. At the time Gongliu acted as the tribal chief, the Zhou tribe moved to Bin (to the west of the present Xunyi in Shaanxi Province); nine generations later, under the leadership of Gugong, they moved to Zhouyuan in Qishan in Shaanxi Province. After that, great changes took place in Zhou society. They began to establish cities, build palaces, set up governing institutions, divide the tribal members into local units

called Yi and were on their way to the primitive stage of a country. Subsequently, the Zhou people crowned Gugong as their Great Grand King and respected him as the founder of the Zhou Dynasty. When his son Wang Ji ascended the throne, the Zhou became increasingly powerful and gradually became the strongest political power in the west of Shang. This made the Shang king so uneasy that he had Wang Ji killed.

After Wang Ji's death, his son Zichang was established as the new chief and was known as King Wen. During his reign, King Wen attached great importance to internal reforms and agricultural development, which further strengthened the Zhou clan. He also launched a series of attacks against the neighboring barbarians and subdued Rong, Di and some other small domains in the west. He then moved the Zhou capital to Feng (to the west of the present Xi'an in Shaanxi Province). However, the Zhou people did not overthrow the control of the Shang Dynasty until the death of King Wen.

### **The Political Situation in the Early Zhou Dynasty**

In approximately the 1100 BC, King Wu, son of King Wen, ascended the throne. Before long, he led thousands of Zhou people, in confederation with other domains and tribes, in revolt against King Zhou of the Shang Dynasty and fought a fierce battle against the Shang army at Muyan, beyond the suburbs of the Shang capital Chaoge (to the southwest of the present Qi County in Henan Province). The Shang army turned against King Zhou, who fled to Chaoge and committed suicide by setting himself on fire. Down fell the Shang Dynasty and up rose the Zhou Dynasty, which is called Western Zhou in history books. It was in about 1046 BC that Gaojing (to the west of the present Xi'an in Shaanxi Province) was established as its capital.

The Western Zhou ruled for eleven generations, with twelve kings over a period of more than two hundred years.

In the beginning, the Zhou rulership was not stable. The remaining influence of the Shang people still constituted a threat to the Zhou Dynasty. In order to consolidate its ruling, King Wu fiefed Wu Geng, son of King Zhou, to the capital of the Shang Dynasty in the hope of governing the remaining Shang through him. King Wu also sent his half-brothers Guanshu, Caishu and Huoshu, the so-called Three Supervisors, to supervise Wu Geng. After the death of King Wu, his son King Cheng succeeded the throne. However, Guanshu and Caishu rebelled against

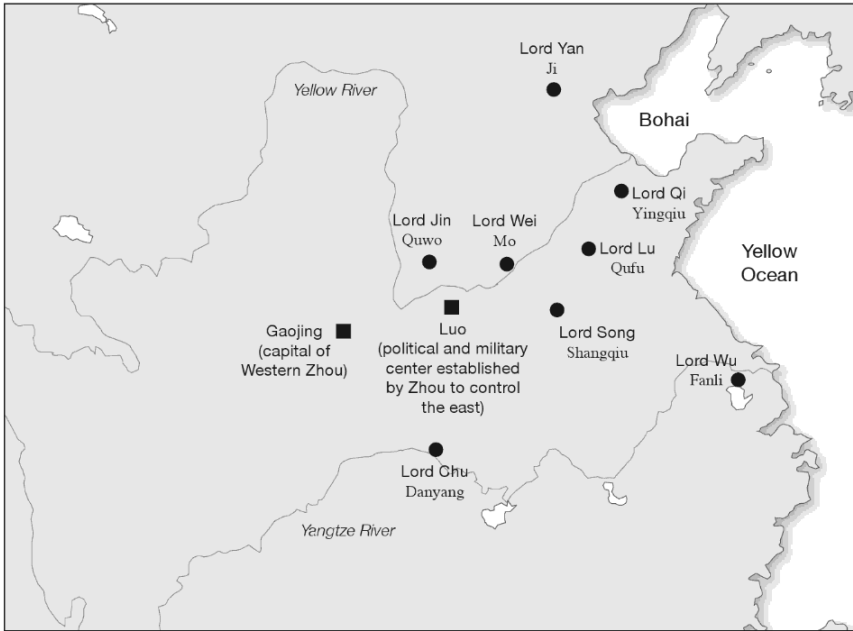
King Cheng in alliance with Wu Geng, and the tribes in the east also rose up in rebellion against the Zhou. At that time, Duke Dan of Zhou, who was assisting the young ruler King Cheng in government, led the army in person and put down the rebellion by Wu Geng and others. Then he led his army in an eastern expedition and consolidated his rule over the eastern territory, thus expanding his influence to the lower reaches of the Yellow River and the Huai River valley.

To prevent similar incidents from recurring, Duke Dan built a city thirty *li* from Luoyang in the east, which became the most important political and military center to control the east. At the same time, he forced the remaining people of Shang to settle down there and set up the Eighth Division of his army to defend the city. Together with the Sixth Division, they became a significant military force in the Zhou Dynasty.

### **The Fiefing System and the Clan Hierarchical System**

The Zhou systems of government adopted quite a few of the political patterns of the Shang Dynasty, retaining and modifying their methods of controlling the internal and external areas under their sphere of influence. The central area where the Son of Heaven of Zhou lived was called King's Land, the environs of the capital city, beyond which were the areas governed by the lords on behalf of the Son of Heaven. Of course, many Zhou institutions differed from those of the Shang Dynasty in a number of aspects. The establishment of those new institutions was significant in the history of the Zhou, and even influenced the entire course of development in Ancient China.

To strengthen their power, King Wu and King Cheng enfeoffed their sons and other people they considered suitable as lords and dispatched them across the country to act as a protective screen for the Zhou royal house. This kind of feudal system was called the feudal fief system. An important model of Zhou governance, the feudal fief system was close to the Shang system of appointing officials to outer regions to subdue barbarians, but was also quite different from it in that the fief system was built on close clan and blood relationships. The Zhou royal house, the supreme ruler in the name of the Son of Heaven, was the head of all the people in the country. The enfeoffed lords with the same surname or different surnames would have to defend the Zhou Son of Heaven and his territory, send periodic tributes and pay periodic attendance at court. When the Zhou clan was at war against neighboring tribes, the lords would have to be ready for service at any time, ready to lead their own



Map of Western Zhou Dynasty

armies alongside the Son of Heaven on his military expeditions. Of the enfeoffed lords in the early days of the Zhou Dynasty, the most important were Lu, Qi, Yan, Song, Wei and Jin.

The Zhou Dynasty mainly enfeoffed descendants with the same surname, which was quite closely related to the clan system practiced in those days. According to the principles of the Zhou clan system, Zhou Son of Heaven was the supreme head of the Zhou people, and his sons were sub-heads, fiefed across the country, defending the territory of Zhou. The fiefed lords gave themselves the title of head of their respective clans. They then enfeoffed their land to their sons, who became ministers and senior officials, who, in their turn, enfeoffed their land to their sons, called intelligentsia. Subsequently, from the Son of Heaven to lords to ministers and senior officials to intelligentsia, a strict hierarchical system based on blood relationships constituted the essential basis of the Zhou rulership.

### The Square-Field System

In the time of the Zhou, both the land and the people were considered to

be possessions of the king. The Son of Heaven of Zhou allocated part of the environs of the capital city as a royal field, in the charge of a minister of civil administration and land affairs, with the rest bestowed to the ministers. The areas beyond the environs of the capital city were granted to the lords, but the Son of Heaven had the power to take back all the land. The laborers on the land were called common people and were at the bottom of the social ladder.

According to ancient annals, the Zhou Dynasty adopted the square-field system. Research by modern scholars has verified that the square-field system was adopted before the Spring and Autumn Period. However, there is no consensus yet as to exactly when the square-field system appeared and what the system meant. As the *Mencius* goes, under the so-called square-field system, the land was divided into square units, which included land for the nobles and for the peasants. The peasants tilled the land for the nobles without being paid before they took care of their own small lots of land. Though what Mencius said should be well-grounded, it cannot be ruled out that there was an idealized element in his writing. As a kind of labor and rent system, the emergence of the square-field system made sense in its time. It was not until the Spring and Autumn Period that the square-field system was replaced by the new land system.

### **The Decline and Fall of the Western Zhou Dynasty**

The Western Zhou Dynasty was initially very powerful. When Kings Cheng, Kang, Zhao and Mu were on the throne, the Western Zhou flourished. However, from the reign of King Yi, because of frequent internal conflicts and external threats, the Western Zhou was in decline. King Li monopolized the mountains and rivers, which led his subjects to revolt and resulted in his expulsion. The nobles took over the sovereignty, which was named the Gonghe Administration. The first year of the Gonghe Administration, 841 BC, saw the beginning of meticulously recorded historical chronicles. When the lords returned power to King Xuan fourteen years later, the Zhou Dynasty regained some of its strength, but frequent military expeditions intensified internal and national conflicts.

After King You, son of King Xuan, succeeded the throne, a series of natural disasters and man-made calamities made the people rebellious. King You bestowed so much favor on the beauty Baosi that a conflict

concerning the succession of throne occurred in 771 BC, when Duke Shen attacked Gaojing with the support of the army of the Quan and the Rong and killed King You at the foot of Mountain Li. The Western Zhou Dynasty collapsed.

## **The Spring and Autumn Period** **and the Warring States Period**

After the Western Zhou Dynasty was overthrown, the Eastern Zhou Dynasty was set up. The Zhou Dynasty was able to rule in name, but the dominant political power began to shift into the hands of the lords, a fundamental change in the nature of the society. The five hundred years of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty can be divided into two stages—the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period.

### **King Ping Moves East and the Lords Contend for Supremacy**

The years between 770 BC and 476 BC were the Spring and Autumn Period in Chinese history. Towards the last years of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the northwestern nomadic people, like the Quan and the Rong, pushed eastward in waves, increasingly threatening the central area of the Zhou rulership. The Zhou territory became smaller and smaller. After King You was killed by the Quan and Rong armies, the Zhou royal house found it difficult to remain in the Guanzhong area. King Ping, with the help of lords like Jin and Zheng, moved the capital to Luoyi (to the east of the present Luoyang in Henan Province) in 770 BC, and founded the Eastern Zhou Dynasty.

After the Zhou moved their capital to the east, the Zhou royal house controlled an area much smaller than before, and its influence was limited to several hundreds of *li* around Luoyi, a small domain always at the mercy of the lords. The declining Zhou royal house was so weak that the lords were no longer obedient to its orders. Consequently, the Son of Heaven lost the status of being the common head of the people in the country.

The decline of the Zhou royal house provided an opening for the lords to contend for political supremacy. In the Spring and Autumn Period, some large states became hegemonous through a policy of annexation. Those who called themselves “Hegemon” or “Overlord” were Duke Huan of the Qi, Duke Xiang of the Song, Duke Wen of the Jin, Duke Mu of the

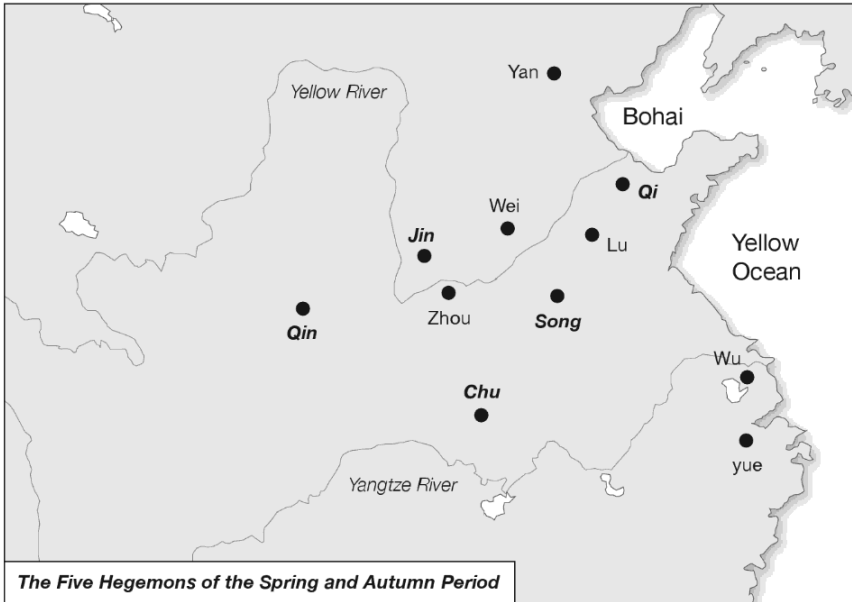
Qin, and Duke Zhuang of the Chu. Together they were entitled “The Five Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn Period.” Duke Huan of the Qi and Duke Wen of the Jin, the most famous of the group, united the lords in the Central Plains by invoking the slogan “loyalty to the king of Zhou and repel the barbarian invaders.” Together, they fought lengthy wars against the Rong and the Di in the north and the state of Chu in the south, which in fact saved the well-developed civilization of the Central Plains. The battle for supremacy between the Jin and the Chu lasted almost the entire Spring and Autumn Period. By the end of the Spring and Autumn Period, King Fuchai of the Wu and King Goujian of the Yue were dominant for a period. Some histories co-list Duke Huan of the Qi and Duke Wen of the Jin as the hegemons of the Spring and Autumn Period.

### **Politics, State and the Economy**

During the Spring and Autumn Period, the royal house declined while the lords became increasingly powerful, constituting a political situation in which “the ritual, music and military campaigns are initiated by the nobles.” The authority of the Son of Heaven of Zhou was no longer critical to the shaping of the social political process. Although the lords remained subject to the Zhou royal house in name, they enjoyed great political sovereignty. With the territorial expansion of each fiefdom and the increasing alienation from the kinship of the Zhou royal house, their independency became more and more apparent.

Within each fiefdom, the overall political structure was mainly an evolution from the Zhou system. The internal governing and external control systems from the time of the Shang and the Zhou evolved into the town-and-country system. The monarchs of the fiefdoms mainly relied on the principles of the fiefing system to control their nobles and officials. The monarchs bestowed land on their nobles as fiefs, which was taken as emoluments by the nobles, whose descendants enjoyed hereditary privileges. There was a whole set of bureaucratic structure within the fiefdoms. In the fiefs, the nobles employed vassals to control the people. By the late Spring and Autumn Period, in some fiefdoms, the nobles increased their power and gradually took over from the ruling power, with their vassals holding such high status that they could interfere in the state affairs of the fiefdom. The situation might be described as “the ministers usurped the state affairs while the vassals controlled the fate of the state.”





Map of Eastern Zhou Dynasty and The Five Hegemons of Spring and Autumn Period

In the time of the Spring and Autumn Period, both society and the economy developed further. With the expansion of the territory came newly developed areas, many of which were privately cultivated land. The cultivation of private land had a great impact on the old square-field system. Increasingly discontent with their toil on the square-fields and with the distribution of the land, the people resented having to cultivate the land for the nobles. As the peasants often concealed their income from private landowners, the national revenue was severely affected. Therefore, from the middle of the Spring and Autumn Period, some states began to change their rent and tax systems. For example, “the tax-by-land system” adopted by the state of Lu in 594 BC ruled that the division between the nobles’ land and private land was removed, and taxes were collected in proportion to the size of the land. The reform of the tax system not only increased the country’s revenue but also made the peasants more enthusiastic about their work. It was a sign of social progress. The collapse of the square-field system was a matter of time. The change to the agricultural system also promoted the development of industry and commerce.

## **The Change of the Social Structure**

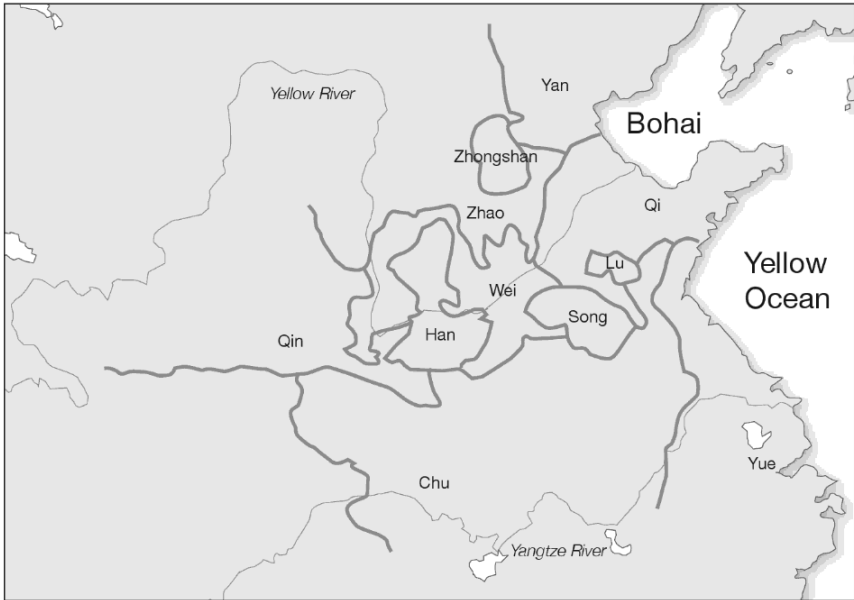
For many years, nobles, commoners and slaves were the three major classes in ancient societies. The rulers appointed officials mainly on the basis of their births. There were the so-called hereditary minister and emolument systems in the Zhou political and social structure, by which the nobles could enjoy the privilege of becoming officials for generations without making any contribution or having any ability. By contrast, the humble minor nobles and commoners had little chance of pursuing a political career, while the slaves could not even enjoy freedom. In the late Spring and Autumn Period, the situation in which social status was determined by birth began to change. Along with the practice of appointing people according to their birth, there evolved an increasingly common practice in which people were appointed according to their ability. Some average or minor nobles, even some commoners, through talent and ability, won favor with the monarch and were trusted with important posts. The so-called intelligentsia class gradually became the pillar of society, and the nobles began to lose their monopoly over social political power.

With the continuing development of society, the commoner class also disappeared. Social status was no longer unchangeable—commoners could become nobles, and nobles could be reduced to commoner status. People working in agriculture, industry and commerce, together with the intelligentsia, had a respectable social status. Not only did the professional officials enter political circles, but also rich merchants quickly gained social status. Even freeing slaves who had served in the military was no longer a rare event. This new social structure was further entrenched during the time of the Warring States Period.

### **The State of Affairs in the Warring States Period and the Reform by Shang Yang**

The Warring States Period in Chinese society lasted from 476 BC to 221 BC, when the Qin Dynasty united the country.

In the early Spring and Autumn Period, there were more than a hundred and forty fiefdoms. After years of contention for supremacy and annexation, only around ten fiefdoms remained. The bigger ones were the Qi, Chu, Yan, Han, Zhao, Wei, and Qin fiefdoms, the so-called “Seven Powers of the Warring States Period.” During the Spring and Autumn Period, the larger state Jin split into the three states of Han,



Map of the Warring States Period (350 BC)

Zhao, and Wei, which were also called the “Three Jins.” These bigger states were rivals over the control of the land and its people for several hundred years, hence their name, the “Warring States.”

During the Warring States Period, great changes took place in society, with the old political and economic systems becoming increasingly outdated and unable to meet the needs of the evolving social development. The increasing intensity of conflict between the fiefdoms forced the states to seek a way to enrich their country, to strengthen their army, and to adopt reforms.

Among the Seven Powers of the Warring States Period, the reforms by Shang Yang were the most thorough and effective. In 356 BC, Duke Xiao of Qin appointed Shang Yang to enforce reform. Shang Yang advocated government by rule of law, with definite rules for reward and punishment. In his measures of reform, he focused on encouraging agriculture, rewarding military credit, restricting business and trade practices, nullifying the nobles’ privileges of title and emolument, and dividing bigger families into small families to increase the revenue. Later on, he also abolished the square-field system, standardized weights and measures, and divided the land into thirty-one counties to replace the feudal fief system in place since the Western Zhou Dynasty. His obvious

motivation was to enrich the country and strengthen the army, but, inevitably, his reforms adversely affected the interests of the original nobles of Qin. After Duke Xiao of Qin died, Shang Yang was killed. However, later Qin rulers adopted the measures taken by Shang Yang in his reforms and the Qin gradually grew more prosperous.

### **Social Development in the Warring States Period**

The reforms introduced by the states in the Warring States Period encouraged the fast development of the social economy. Iron tools were widely used in agriculture; in some areas, cattle were used for ploughing; each state built water conservancy works; iron-smelting, bronze-casting, weaving and porcelain-molding techniques were improved; metal currency was widely used; the variety and number of various commodities increased, and the number of commercial cities increased.

Fundamental changes also took place in the social structure during the Warring States Period. The newly emerging land-holding peasant class gradually became the major force of agricultural production. The landowner, labor hiring class put in an appearance. The social status of handicraft workers and businessmen also improved to the extent that big, wealthy merchants could obtain political power through their immense wealth. At the same time, when the original noble class began to disintegrate, salary-earning bureaucrats and various intellectual officials increased in number.

During the Spring and Autumn Period, private schools prospered, and lecture tours became popular. By the time of the Warring States Period, the intelligentsia class grew bigger. The monarchs appealed for talented people from all over the country, and the practice of patronizing intellectuals prevailed. Social reforms further stimulated various philosophies and several schools of thought emerged. The major ones were the Schools of Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Legalism, Sophists, Military Treatises, Yin and Yang, Divine Farmer, Coalition Persuaders and Selecticism. There emerged a golden age in the Chinese history of thought—the “Contention of One Hundred Schools of Thought.”

### **The Wars of Annexation at the End of the Warring States Period and the Unification of China by Qin**

The ceaseless contention for supremacy between the bigger states in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period brought great

suffering to the populace, as well as seriously damaging the fabric of society. People longed for the fighting to cease and for the country to be unified.

In view of the fact that only around ten fiefdoms survived to the Warring States Period, the wars of annexation were an essential step in ending the division and moving towards unification. By the end of this Period, social economic development and the reforms introduced reinforced the potential power of each state and ignited their desire for annexation, with everyone hoping to build an empire. Wars between the major states became increasingly frequent and intense, with each war lasting from several months to several years. Losses were high—in the battle of Changping between the states of Qin and Zhao in 260 BC, the Qin deployed an army of 600,000 soldiers, while up to 400,000 Zhao soldiers who surrendered after being defeated were buried alive.

The state of Qin quickly improved after the Shang Yang reforms. Its national power increased and it emerged from years of annexation wars to become the most powerful state. The strength of Qin was a matter of serious concern for the other states and they decided to unite to control its expansion. However, the Qin adopted a strategy of divide and conquer—they made allies of more distant states and attacked neighboring states, breaking them up one by one. This policy was known as the Coalition Persuaders. The Qin expedition wars were the key to the shaping of the political situation in the late Warring States Period.

After thorough preparation, King Yingzheng of the state of Qin, in 230 BC, began to launch military attacks against the six states of Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi. Ten years later, in 221 BC, he finally fulfilled his dream of uniting China, putting an end to years of chaos with fiefdoms tearing apart the nation and contending for supremacy. The establishment of the Qin Dynasty marked a new phase in the history of China.

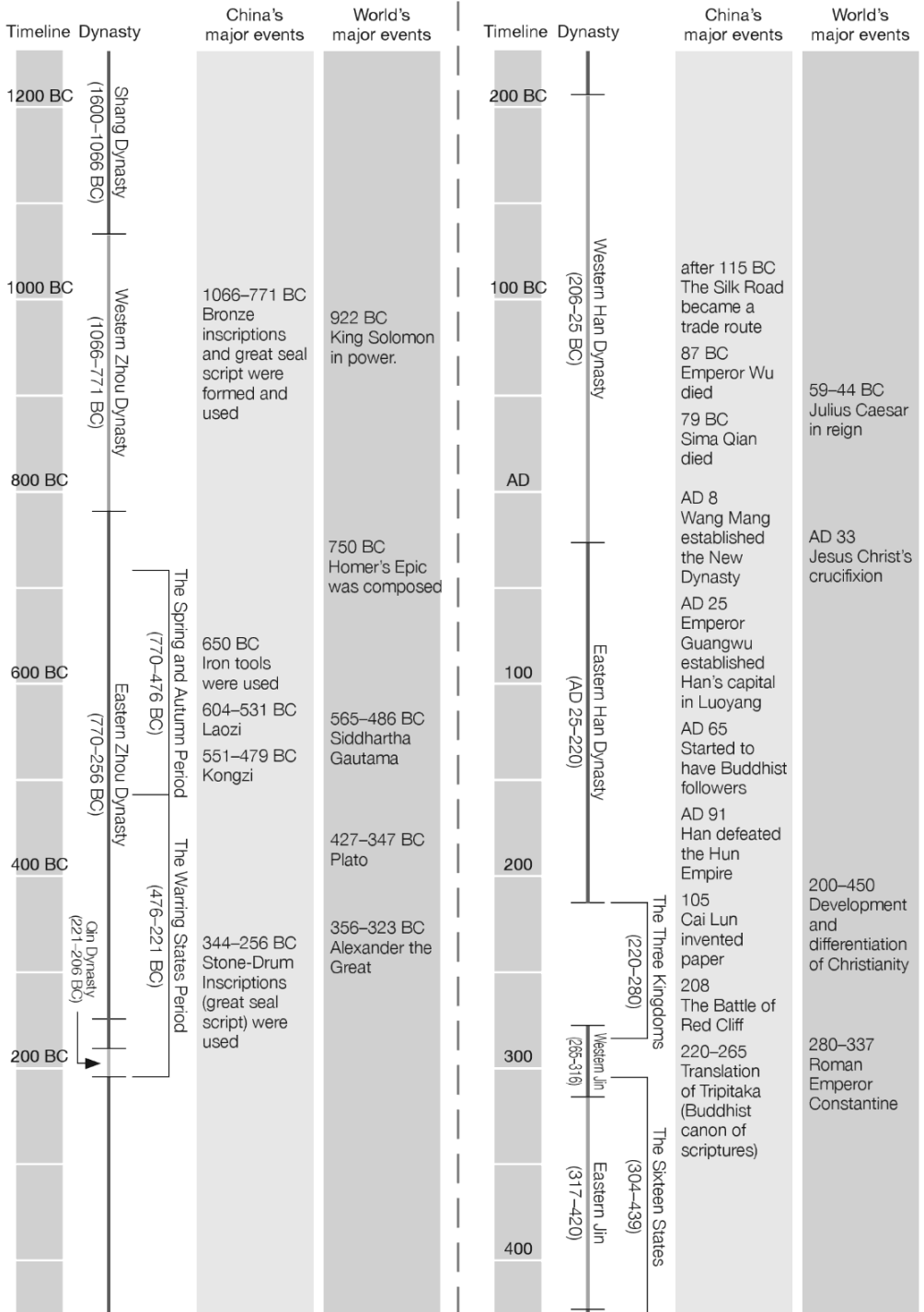


CHAPTER THREE

**CHINA FROM THE QIN DYNASTY TO  
THE TANG DYNASTY**

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Free-style calligraphy of “史” (*shǐ*) means “history” in Chinese



Timeline	Dynasty	China's major events	World's major events
400	Eastern Jin (317-420)		
		The Sixteen States (304-439)	
500		499 Emperor Wen of the Northern Wei died	445 The end of Roman Empire
		584 The Grand Canal building	
600		627-649 Zhenguan Administration	570-632 Muhammad
		635 Luminous Religion introduced to China	
		645 Monk Xuanzang brought Sanskrit texts back to Chang'an and printed pictures of Buddhas	
700		701-762 Li Bai	710-791 Nara Period of Japan
		712-770 Du Fu	742-814 Charles the Great
800		713-743 The Prosperity of the Kaiyuan Era	800 Charlemagne crowned Emperor of Rome
		750 Invention of gunpowder in China	
900		763 An-Shi Rebellion settled	890 The Vikings invaded Anglo-Saxon
		772-846 Bai Juyi	
		884 Huang Chao Rebellion settled	
1000			



## ❧ The Qin and Han Dynasties ❧

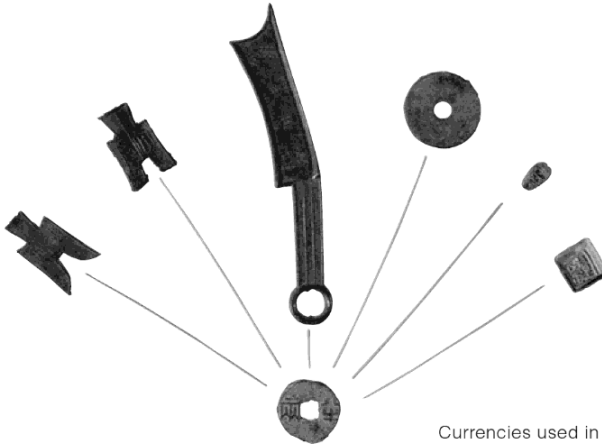
### The Establishment of the Qin Dynasty

The First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Yingzheng, founded the Qin Empire. It was Yingzheng who introduced the concept of centralized power, which lasted for more than two thousand years. In his reign, the economic potential and military superiority of the Qin reached an unprecedentedly high level, as they conquered the six eastern states—the Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi—and put an end to the chaotic political situation where numerous overlords and small states competed for supremacy. A powerful, unified empire covering a vast territory was established. Civilization and social progress in China, indeed in the whole Eastern Asian area, entered a new historical era.

With Xianyang as its capital, the territory of the Qin Empire extended in the east to the ocean, in the west to the west of Gansu Province, in the north to the Great Wall behind the Yanshan Mountains, and in the south to the coastline of the Southern Sea. Throughout this vast territory, the First Emperor implemented autocratic centralized government and set up a centralized administration based on the theory



Territory of the Qin Dynasty



Currencies used in the Qin Dynasty

of the Legalist School. He gave himself the title of “August Emperor” to emphasize his supreme authority in the political system of the bureaucratic empire by assuming the role of the highest law-maker, the highest arbitrator and the chief executive. After the Qin Dynasty collapsed, the title of August Emperor continued to be used by later dynasties until the Revolution in 1911.

The Qin Empire established central and regional institutions different from those of the previous states. The central government consisted of the Chancellor, the Imperial Inspector, the Military Commander and senior officials (three lords and nine senior officials), responsible for assisting the First Emperor in handling military and administrative matters. The regional institutions were made up of commands and counties, where the civil governor and the magistrate enforced government decrees, governed the people, collected taxes, and conscripted unpaid laborers and soldiers for military service. Through this bureaucratic system, which extended from the central government to local offices, the First Emperor took into his hands complete control of the country.

In order to consolidate this unified political power, the First Emperor introduced a series of political, economic and cultural measures. Politically, he reinforced the centralization system, intensified military attacks against the Hun Empire in the north and built the Great Wall; he launched a military campaign in the south of the Qinling Mountains, pushing further south the frontier of commands and counties. Economically, he adopted such measures as standardizing

weights, measures and currencies. Culturally, he unified styles of writing by taking the simplified small-seal script of Qin as the standard shape of character to be enforced throughout the country and abolishing the writing styles widely used in the six former states. Moreover, to strengthen his control over culture and ideology, the First Emperor resorted to political measures to suppress the schools of thought which burgeoned in the Warring States Period by burning archives—except those writings on medicine, agriculture, divination and mathematics—and burying alive 460 Confucian scholars.

### **The Collapse of the Qin Dynasty and the Competition for Power between Chu and Han**

In 221 BC, the Qin state was united with the other six states. Ten years later, the First Emperor died on an inspection tour to the east. Only three years later the Qin Dynasty crumbled. How could the once powerful Qin Dynasty collapse so suddenly? The answer lies in its ruthless government, which resulted in unbearable hardship for the populace, especially for the people in the six former states. Those who had suffered the chaos of the Warring States Period now found that the combined burdens of taxation, military service, forced, unpaid labor and the new



First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (260 BC–210 BC)

harsh laws made life even more miserable. In spite of the fact that social production had been seriously damaged, the Qin Dynasty continued to exact high taxes during times of war and forced the peasants to turn in the greater part of their harvest. Although the unification wars were over, the Qin Dynasty went from bad to worse in conscripting soldiers and forcing labor. An enormous amount of manpower went into building massive construction projects, such as palaces, tombs and the Great Wall. Harsh laws such

as clan responsibility and other cruel penalties were enforced as part of the legal system. This meant that all members of a family unit would be killed if one of the family committed an offence; even their neighbors would be held responsible for an individual's wrongdoing, by being related to or being friendly to him.

In 210 BC, the Second Emperor of the Qin Dynasty ascended the throne. He maintained the Qin Dynasty's harsh ruling system, immediate conscription and ruthless taxation. In July in the following year, in the Daze village in Jin County (in the southeast of the present Suzhou in Anhui Province), a group of peasants who arrived late for their military service of defending the frontier, under the leadership of Chen Sheng (?-208 BC) and Wu Guang (?-208 BC), first raised the flag of fighting against the Qin Dynasty. In the name of Zhang Chu, Chen Sheng first gained the sympathy and support of the people in the former state of Chu, then the support of people country-wide, including those in the six former states. Although Chen Sheng rebellion was put down by the Qin army, the various other rebel armies which formed throughout the land grew bigger, stronger and more determined to overthrow the Qin. Among them, the armies led by Xiang Yu (233 BC-202 BC), a descendant of an aristocratic family from the Chu state and by Liu Bang (256 BC-195 BC) from Pei County (in the northwest of the present Xuzhou in Jiangsu Province) gave the Qin the most to fear. In 207 BC, the Chu army led by Xiang Yu, filled with hatred for the ruthless Qin Dynasty, fought a brave battle against the out-numbered Qin army in Julu (in the southwest of the present Pingxiang County in Hebei Province) and completely wiped out its main force. In the following year, Liu Bang led his army into the Guanzhong area through Wuguan and pressed on to Xianyang, where Emperor Ziying of the Qin Dynasty was forced to surrender the capital. The Qin Dynasty had totally collapsed.

Though the Qin Dynasty had been overthrown, the political situation was still not clear. Subsequently, in the course of rebuilding a unified political power, the Chu-Han War, which lasted for nearly four years, broke out between Liu Bang and Xiang Yu. In the beginning, Xiang Yu, with his exceptional military talent, had the upper hand. However, the politically more astute Liu Bang later reversed this position by gaining support from such outstandingly talented men as Zhang Liang (?-189 BC), Xiao He (?-193 BC) and Han Xin (?-196 BC). His army gradually penetrated into Xiang Yu's territory and defeated the

Chu army in Gaixia (in the southeast of the present Lingbi County in Anhui Province) in 202 BC. Xiang Yu subsequently committed suicide at the Wujiang River (in the northeast of the present He County in Anhui Province). Liu Bang proclaimed himself emperor, established the Han Dynasty, made Chang'an its capital and became the Exalted Founder of the Han Dynasty. The unification of the country, begun by the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, was further consolidated.

### **Rehabilitation and the Administration of Emperors Wen and Jing**

The Han Dynasty founded by Liu Bang inherited the administrative structure of the Qin Dynasty, retained many of the Qin systems and continued to implement the policy of government by law. However, in view of the lessons drawn from the sudden collapse of that dynasty, the rulers of the early Han Dynasty felt that the ideological basis of government had to be modified. As a result, the *Huanglao* (the Yellow Emperor and Laozi) tradition and the Confucian ideals popular in the society ever since the Warring States Period were considered afresh by the new rulers.

As the Han Dynasty came into being during a time of war, its primary concern was to revive the economy and to stabilize the social order. The Han rulers adopted the *Huanglao* tradition of putting into practice the policy of rehabilitation by demobilizing soldiers, allocating titles and land and favoring independent farmers. The national policy of “giving people a peaceful life and governing with moderate measures” had a great impact on the recovery of social production.

In the early years of the Western Han Dynasty, there occurred a series of dramatic political incidents—the removal of such honored ministers as Han Xin and Ying Bu by Liu Bang and Empress Lü; Empress Lü's usurpation of power and oppression of the lords of the Liu clan after Liu Bang's death; and the expulsion of the Lü clan by the clique of ministers after the death of Empress Lü. However, these Chang'an court intrigues did not hinder the recovery of the economy. With the gradual stabilization of government in the early years of the Han Dynasty, especially in the reigns of Emperor Wen and Emperor Jing, came a relatively long period of political stabilization. The Emperors Wen and Jing advocated frugality, light corvée and low taxes, reduced penalties and abolished many harsh laws. The accumulation of social wealth, the improvement of productivity and the enlightened government enabled the country to flourish and develop.

Hence, this period was honored as the “Administration of Emperors Wen and Jing” in Chinese history.

### Emperor Wu and the Golden Age of the Han Dynasty

After more than seventy years of development in the early years of the Han Dynasty, by the time Emperor Wu came to the throne, the economy flourished and national power was strengthened. The Han Dynasty reached its pinnacle to become the most powerful country in the world at that time.

Emperor Wu, a man of superior talent and vision, reformed the internal affairs of the country, further consolidated the centralized bureaucratic administration, financed expeditions abroad and continued to extend and intensify Han influence over the country’s peripheral areas.

Domestically, Emperor Wu’s most important reform was to abolish feudal lords, thus eliminating their potential to cause political discontent. He accepted the advice of the Great Confucianist Dong Zhongshu (180 BC–115 BC), “rejecting other schools of thought and only respecting Confucianism,” and officially adopted Confucianism as the ideological



Territory of the Western Han Dynasty (AD 2)



A painting showing Emperor Wu's blessing on Zhang Qian's expedition to the Western Regions (Tang Dynasty)

creed of the Han Dynasty. The political tradition of centralized power tradition was finally established in China. In the political and economic systems, Emperor Wu also carried out some important reforms.

Emperor Wu launched wars against the Hun Empire in the north. After the collapse of the Qin Dynasty, the Huns took the opportunity to raid the northern border. In the early days of the Han Dynasty, the country was so weak that the Exalted Emperor of Han, Liu Bang, was trapped by the Hun hordes near Pingcheng (to the northeast of present Datong in Shanxi Province). The rulers prior to Emperor Wu had followed the policy of marrying princesses to the Hun rulers and giving lots of gifts. Emperor Wu put an end to this by launching long and fierce wars against the Hun Empire. The Han army drove deep into the Gobi desert and broke the Hun Empire, pushing the frontier of the Han Dynasty further north and northwest, bringing the Hexi Corridor (in the northwest of the present Gansu Province) under its control and setting up four commands in the area. In the war against the Huns a number of outstanding generals came to the fore, the most famous of whom were Wei Qing and Huo Qubing.

The war against the Huns also created an opportunity for the Han Dynasty to gain a better understanding of the outside world. In order to seek allies against the Hun Empire, Emperor Wu sent an envoy,

Zhang Qian, to the Western Regions (mainly in the present Xinjiang Autonomous Region). Zhang Qian endured great hardship during his two commissions as ambassador and, although he failed to persuade Dayuezhi to form an alliance with the Han Dynasty in fighting the Hun Empire, he came back with a complete and accurate report of the Western Regions. This prompted the Han Dynasty to divert significant manpower and resources to annexing the Western Regions. Despite the general exhaustion of the populace and the drainage of the treasury, the Han Dynasty incorporated the development of the Western Regions into the mainstream of the unified Chinese history—the history of the Western Regions became part of the history of China. The campaigns against the Western Regions and the annexing of the area turned over a new page in the history of cultural contacts between China and the West. A great variety of exquisite Chinese goods, silk in particular, was transported to the West through the Hexi Corridor and the Western Regions. This route was to become known as the Silk Road.

Emperor Wu also undertook military campaigns in the southwest and in the southeast, which brought more areas and ethnic minority groups under the central control system of the Han Dynasty. In the reign of Emperor Wu, the primary scale and range of the Chinese political map was set; the influence of Chinese civilization reached its height. This was the Golden Age of the Han Dynasty.

### **Wang Mang's Reform and the Mid-prosperity of Emperor Guangwu**

As society and the economy developed, however, more and more problems arose. The most serious of these were land annexation and the increasing poverty of the independent peasants. Big landowners, such as aristocrats and bureaucrats, frequently annexed land from small peasants. As a result, the rich became richer and the poor became poorer, often losing all their land. Those small peasants who were stripped of their land either became itinerants or were reduced to the status of slaves. With the deterioration of the land problem, social crises intensified, and the central government of the Han Dynasty focused its attention on instituting reforms. However, to curb land annexation and to reduce the number of slaves and servants would be against the interests of the privileged class, so it was likely that any reforms would only be enforced with difficulty.



Wang Mang, a relative of the empress dowager of the Han Dynasty, was in his youth influenced by intellectuals and subsequently lived his life according to the tenets of Confucianism. In the court struggle for power towards the end of the Western Han Dynasty, Wang's excellent reputation as a reformer won him wide support from all levels of society. He easily seized power and, eventually, the throne. He established the New Dynasty and proclaimed himself emperor. However, the reforms he initiated to ease the current social crises ended in failure. One of the most important of Wang Mang's reforms was designed to address the problem of land ownership and the use of slaves and servants. He prohibited the buying and selling of land, slaves and servants and restricted the amount of land and the number of slaves and servants that could be owned by individuals. Wang Mang also put into practice a number of related reform measures, such as introducing new currency, improving the bureaucratic system and changing place names. His reforms, based on *The Rituals of the Zhou Dynasty*, attempted to turn contemporary society into the ideal old model depicted in the book. However, society at the end of the Western Han Dynasty was too sophisticated to change back to the old model. A further drawback for Wang was that he frequently changed his mind when attempting to implement his reforms and was at a loss when he encountered opposition. As a result, many of his reforms ended in failure.

Wang Mang's lack of success in reforming the social order resulted in a number of crises. Faced with famine and an unsympathetic government, the peasants rose up in rebellion. In the ensuing uprising, the Green Woodsmen and the Red Eyebrows rebel groups proved to be better organized and more powerful than Wang Mang's supporters. When the royal family of Liu, who hated Wang Mang for usurping the throne, also joined the uprising, the Han Dynasty was restored. Wang Mang was killed and his New Dynasty disintegrated. Liu Xiu, a descendant of Emperor Jing from the Nanyang (6 BC–AD 57) command and a man of distinguished political and military talent, won the final victory over his rivals. He unified the country and established the central government of the Han Dynasty in its capital Luoyang. This dynasty was named the Eastern Han Dynasty and the era known as "Mid-prosperity of Emperor Guangwu" began. Liu Xiu became the first ruler of the Eastern Han Dynasty and was entitled Emperor Guangwu.

### **The Recovery and Development of Society and the Economy in the Eastern Han Dynasty**

Emperor Guangwu was a commoner and was well aware of how the poor suffered. After he ascended the throne, he issued nine imperial edicts to free and to forbid the abuse of slaves and servants. He stressed that “in the nature of Heaven and Earth man should be the most precious,” and worked hard to solve the many social problems he had inherited. He also gave orders to reduce taxation and to abolish the exorbitant taxes and excessive levies of the reign of Wang Mang. He reformed the bureaucratic system and advocated frugality. After more than a decade’s unceasing effort, a relatively stable situation emerged across the country.

The early Eastern Han Dynasty was politically enlightened; it acknowledged the importance of agriculture; it constructed irrigation systems; and it improved various technologies. Over seventy years of recovery and development, the society and economy of the Eastern Han Dynasty caught up with and exceeded the achievements of the Western Han Dynasty. The accumulation of social wealth and the improvement of production skills saw the population increase; more arable land was farmed and the national revenue was increased. It was due to the government’s strong financial standing that the Eastern Han Dynasty could fight a lengthy war against the Huns and the West Qiang, in addition to running the Western Regions in a manner comparable to that of the Western Han Dynasty.

Important changes took place in the political situation on the northern prairies. The Hun Empire, after repeated military attacks by the Han armies, split into the Southern Huns and the Northern Huns. The Southern Huns submitted to the Han Dynasty; the Northern Huns were no longer strong enough to rival the Han Dynasty. However, in the east of the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau, as well as along the Yellow River to the west of the Long Mountains, the Eastern Han Dynasty faced fierce and long lasting revolts by the Qiang tribes. The Eastern Han Dynasty incurred huge expense in the fight against the Qiang tribes and the defence of its frontiers in other areas. In the Western Regions, the Eastern Han Dynasty gained the support of many other states and maintained a lasting political dominance over the area. In the course of overseeing the affairs of the Western Regions, there emerged a number of men who were experts on the area. One of these was Ban Chao, who worked for thirty years in the Western Regions, strengthening the link

between the Western Regions and the inland. He is renowned for having sent an envoy to the Roman Empire. The envoy traveled as far as the Persian Gulf. In the colorful history of the Silk Road, Ban Chao deserves his own chapter.

### **Political Corruption by the End of the Eastern Han Dynasty and the Yellow Turban Rebellion**

By the late Western Han Dynasty, many great families and clans had grown very powerful. The main political power on the basis of which Liu Xiu founded the Eastern Han Dynasty was that of big landowners in the area of Nanyang and Hebei. During the Eastern Han Dynasty, many great families spread to other commands and counties. They annexed land and became overlords in the new areas. In their big estates they conscripted dependent peasants to work for them and increase their wealth and kept private armies to enhance their position. They were so powerful that the government decrees could not be implemented. Heavy tax losses, in particular, could not be curbed. The arrogance of the great landowners directly threatened the solidity of the Eastern Han Dynasty. Liu Xiu, therefore, took measures to weaken the great families. He issued the land-measuring order to check the amount of arable land and registered people across the country in order to control and dismantle the private armies of the great families. Although these measures were to some extent effective, the influence of the great families was not restricted. On the contrary, it so intensified towards the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty that it finally resulted in the dissolution of the empire.

From the mid-Eastern Han Dynasty on, for various reasons, many emperors had short lives. When the young, inexperienced emperors came to the throne, the relatives of the empress dowagers and the court eunuchs took advantage of the situation to take control of state affairs. Widely regarded as corrupt and incompetent, they used any means to extort money from the populace and would stop at nothing to increase their material gains. The representatives of the scholar-officials, men of talent and integrity, who had previously governed the country, were attacked and suppressed. Eventually, the Dynasty descended into corruption and social and political conflict intensified.

From the time Emperor Wu established the imperial college, the standard of higher education in the Han Dynasty had improved to

the extent that there were now many excellent scholars and officials. The emperors of the early Eastern Han Dynasty greatly respected Confucianism. The system of the imperial college, the official local schools and the private schools guaranteed a gradual improvement in the national education. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, many Confucianists who had graduated from, or were studying at, the imperial college were highly critical of the political situation at the time. They voiced their criticisms publicly and, with the support of the general public, became a social force not to be underestimated. However, the eunuchs used the imperial power they had usurped to suppress them. Many popular scholar-officials were killed, and their relatives and supporters were imprisoned. This became known as the notorious “Disaster of Party Sanction.”

The incident of the Party Sanction exposed the corruption of the Eastern Han Dynasty, in which the intellectuals and common people no longer had any confidence. It was obvious that the situation could not continue and it came as no surprise when the “Yellow Turban Rebellion” occurred. Zhang Jiao and his brothers from Hebei, in the name of the religion “Greatest Peace Taoism,” organized peasants all over the country and began their revolt in February 184. The participants all wore yellow kerchiefs and were known as the “Yellow Turbans.” They had widespread support in the valleys of the Yellow River and the Yangtze River. Although the Yellow Turbans were eventually suppressed by the combined forces of the government army and local powerful families, the central authority of the Eastern Han Dynasty was irrevocably weakened. The bureaucratic intellectual class who seized political and military power during the Yellow Turban conflict was no longer loyal to the imperial family. This further contributed to the eventual downfall of the Eastern Han Dynasty.

## ❧ The Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties ❧

### The Tripartite Confrontation

The Eastern Han Dynasty existed only in name to the indifferent local military cliques, which were vigorously expanding their own forces in addition to annexing other cliques. This resulted in lengthy period of turmoil as warlords competed for power. The most powerful warlords

in the north of China and the Central Plains were Yuan Shao (?–202) and Cao Cao (155–220). Yuan Shao dominated a bigger part of the territory and had a numerically superior army, so he was contemptuous of Cao Cao. In fact, however, Cao Cao was so talented that he became a renowned politician and militarist. In 196, Cao Cao gained the political initiative, by welcoming the homeless Emperor Xian of the Han Dynasty to Xuchang before embarking on expeditions to annex the territory of other warlords in the name of Chancellor of the Han Dynasty, the so-called “hold the Son of Heaven to order the other lords” campaign. In 200, in the Battle of Guandu, Cao Cao defeated Yuan Shao, in spite of his army being outnumbered. Before long, Cao Cao had unified the whole of North China.

In the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, two strong military cliques emerged. One was the Sun Quan clique, in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River; the other was the Liu Bei clique, in the Jiangnan area. Liu Bei, who originally fled to Jingzhou from the north to seek shelter from Liu Biao, formed an alliance with the Sun Quan clique to resist Cao Cao when the latter led his strong army to the south. In the Battle of Red Cliff in 208, their allied army shattered Cao Cao’s dream of unifying the country and thus prolonged the period of disunity. Soon afterwards, Liu Bei marched into the Shu area in Sichuan, Sun Quan controlled the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and Cao Cao was stationed in the north. In 220, Cao Pei, son of Cao Cao, usurped the throne of the Han Dynasty, proclaimed himself emperor, made Luoyang his capital, and named his Dynasty Wei. In 221, Liu Bei claimed that he was the legitimate Emperor of Han and established his kingdom, known as Shu in history. In 222, Sun Quan assumed the title of king; seven years later, he enthroned himself emperor and named his Dynasty Wu. The country became a tripartite.

Among the three kingdoms, Wei had the largest population, a bigger territory and was the strongest power. Then came Wu from the Sun family, followed by Shu, the weakest. Zhuge Liang, an outstanding politician in the Shu-han kingdom, proposed forming an alliance with Wu to fight against Cao Cao. He also reformed the civil affairs system, developed the economy and used offence as a means of defence, by launching expeditions to the north. However, with the gradual consolidation of the political situation and the recovery of the agricultural economy in the north, Wei from the family of Cao became increasingly powerful. In 263, Sima Zhao, who had virtual control of the



The Tripartite Confrontation (262)

Wei kingdom, undertook campaigns to exterminate Shu. Two years later, Sima Yan (265–290) ascended the throne, founded the Jin Dynasty, known as the Western Jin Dynasty, and became Emperor Wu of the Jin Dynasty. In 280, the Jin army marched south and conquered the Wu kingdom. The tripartite ended and China was reunified.

### **The Short-lived Unification by Western Jin and the Yongjia Rebellion**

Shortly after it unified the country, court intrigues resulted in the end of the Western Jin Dynasty. The successor to Emperor Wu, Emperor Hui of the Jin Dynasty was mentally retarded. In 290, Jia Nanfeng, empress consort of Emperor Hui, came into conflict with Yang Jun, grandfather of Emperor Hui, over control of the throne. Consequently, the royal family and relatives of the empress dowagers were all involved in this cruel slaughter. “The Rebellion of Eight Princes” was a political disaster, which dragged elite troops and outstanding politicians and scholars into

the turmoil. Production was sabotaged, the economy went into recession, and famine became widespread. The internal conflict pushed the Western Jin Dynasty to the brink of extinction.

In the meantime, instances of revolt by ethnic minorities increased. Since the Eastern Han Dynasty, ethnic minority groups, including the Huns, Xianbei, Jie, Di and Qiang tribes, had settled in large numbers in the agricultural and semi-agricultural areas of the north and northwest. Immigration to the commands south of the Great Wall, where conditions were much better, contributed much to the prosperity and evolution of the tribes. However, the upper classes of the tribes were unwilling to submit to ruthless government by corrupt officials in the commands and the counties, so they planted the seeds of hatred in the commoners of the various ethnic minority groups, which resulted in the estrangement of the ethnic minorities. When the power of the Western Jin government was undermined during the savage internal conflict, the chief of the Huns, Liu Yuan, took the opportunity to revolt against the Western Jin Dynasty. Famine and warfare brought serious suffering to north China. The Western Jin regime was essentially dissolved in the year of Yongjia, during the reign of Emperor Huai of the Jin Dynasty. The disaster was called the “Yongjia Rebellion.” In the time of Liu Cong, son of Liu Yuan, the Hun hordes conquered Luoyang and Chang’an. They captured and later slew the last two emperors of the Western Jin Dynasty, Emperors Huai and Min. The Western Jin Dynasty collapsed. China fell into a long period of division.

### **The Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Sixteen States**

In 317, the year after the Huns captured Chang’an, with the support of the great northern families, such as Wang Dao from Langye, who had fled south, and the many refugees, Sima Rui (276–322), a member of the Western Jin imperial family, re-established the regime of the Jin Dynasty in Jiankang (the present Nanjing in Jiangsu Province), known historically as the Eastern Jin Dynasty. Sima Rui was Emperor Yuan of the Jin Dynasty. The Eastern Jin regime organized the northern refugees to open up the south of the Yangtze River and to prevent turmoil in the ethnic minority from spreading to the south. This resulted in the preservation of Chinese culture and its further developed south of the Yangtze River. Some Eastern Jin officials even organized several northern expeditions in an attempt to recover the lost land in the north. Among whom the most famous were Zu Ti and Huan Wen.

In North China, such ethnic minority groups as the Huns, Xianbei, Jie, Di and Qiang, who rose up in arms, produced many chiefs skilled both in military and civil affairs. Each chief aimed to build a regime centered around his ethnic minority group. Over a hundred years, more than ten such ethnic minority regimes appeared successively in the north—the Former Zhao, the Later Zhao, the Former Yan, the Former Qin, the Later Yan, the Later Qin, the Western Qin, the Later Liang, the Southern Liang, the Northern Liang, the Xia Kingdom, the Western Yan and the Southern Yan, in addition to a few warlord-led Han ethnic groups like the Former Liang, the Western Liang and the Northern Yan. That is, sixteen states of some importance appeared in the north, and were known historically as the Sixteen States.

The minority regimes all adopted and inherited the political and other related Chinese systems initiated by the Qin and Han dynasties, and undertook the task of unifying the country and establishing a unified autocratic government. Among the sixteen states, only the Former Qin of the Di tribes in the reign of Fu Jian (338–385) unified north China. In 383, Fu Jian who had succeeded in unifying the north launched a war against Eastern Jin in the hope of unifying the country. The Prime Minister of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Xie An, organized the resistance. The Jin army defeated Fu Jian and his troops when Fu Jian's soldiers fled the Battle of Feishui. Shortly after this, the Xianbei and Qiang tribes took the opportunity to revolt and overthrew the Former Qin. North China was again plunged into chaos.

### **The Confrontation between South and North and the Assimilation of the Ethnic Minority Groups**

The Eastern Jin regime was long under the control of the hereditary aristocratic families. When they were on the decline, the second-class scholar official Liu Yu, who had a military background, took over power. In 420, Liu Yu usurped the throne and established the Song Dynasty. Over the next 160 years, south China was ruled by four dynasties—the Song, Qi, Liang and Chen dynasties, which all made Jiangkang (the present Nanjing in Jiangsu Province) their capital and established succession by virtues. These four dynasties are known as the Southern Dynasties.

The relative social stability of the Southern Dynasties, together with the economic development south of the Yangtze River, saw the southern economy gradually approach the level of the northern economy. There



existed a special class, scholar-officials, in the society of the Southern Dynasties. This class, as well as its related systems, came into being during the Wei and Jin dynasties. They had a special tradition of cultural education, a long family history of learning and becoming officials and the special privilege of enjoying a political and economic status high above the other social classes. The higher posts of the civil service in the Eastern Jin Dynasty were almost all monopolized by the scholar-officials. This class of scholar-officials was an important base on which to build up the Southern Dynasties after the Eastern Jin, the chief supplier of the executive personnel of the country and the main creator of the cultural achievements of the Southern Dynasties as well. For a long period, the scholar-officials formed the base of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties. In the late Southern Dynasties, the class of scholar-officials lost their integrity and became corrupt. This signaled the imminent end of the Southern Dynasties.

In the north of China, the Tuoba group of the Xianbei ethnic group slowly conquered the other warlords, putting an end to the division and turmoil of the Sixteen States and established the kingdom of Wei, known as the Later Wei or the Northern Wei in history. In the early sixth century, the Northern Wei split into the Eastern Wei and the Western Wei, which was replaced respectively by the Northern Qi and the Northern Zhou. The five kingdoms were called the Northern Dynasties in history. The Northern Dynasties and the Southern Dynasties existed simultaneously, confronting each other in the north and in the south, hence its name the Southern and Northern Dynasties.

During the Northern Dynasties, a large number of ethnic minority groups settled down among the inhabitants of the Central Plains. The royal families and the aristocratic class mainly came from the Xianbei group, as did the majority of the army's recruits. Such ethnic minority groups preserved many of their traditions, which had a strong impact on social life in the north. Meanwhile, Chinese civilization exerted its own influence on the ethnic migrants. The monarchs of the Northern Dynasties, deeply attracted by traditional Chinese civilization, vigorously promoted Sinification, thus accelerating the social progress of various minority groups. Through the experience of the Northern Dynasties, northern settlers from different ethnic minority groups with their different religions and different languages, gradually combined into one group, which accepted the historical tradition of Chinese civilization. In this process, the Sinification policy of Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern

Wei, Yuan Hong, is the most noteworthy. He moved his capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang and forced the Xianbei nobles to speak Chinese, which played a significant role in stabilizing northern social structure and promoting the Sinification of various northern minority groups.

With the recovery of the agricultural economy and the stability of the political order in the north, the reconstruction of northern society strengthened its overall social power. By contrast, the scholar-officials in the Southern Dynasties were corrupt and their power was weak; the Southern Dynasties could no longer rival the north. In 577, Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou Dynasty began a military campaign, conquered Northern Qi and unified the north of China.

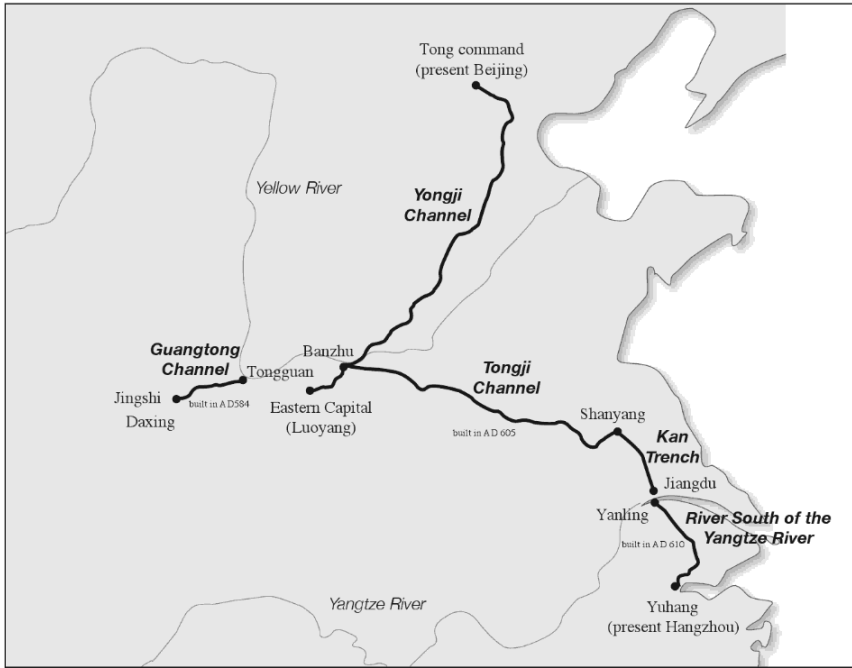
## The Sui and Tang Dynasties

### The Reestablishment of Centralized Power

Shortly after the Northern Zhou unified the north, a boy ruler ascended the throne. A relative of the empress dowager, Yang Jian (541–604), was the regent. In 581, Yang Jian seized power, established the Sui Dynasty, made Chang'an the capital and became Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty. In 589, when the Sui army marched south, the last monarch of the Southern Dynasties, that is, the last emperor of the Chen Dynasty, was forced to surrender. The Chen Dynasty came to an end. Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty not only put an end to the Southern and Northern Dynasties, but also ended the long-lasting divisions caused by the warlords and the confrontation between the Southern and Northern Dynasties in China. The ethnic assimilation in the north and the economic development in the south played a key role in the quick prosperity of the Sui Dynasty after the unification.

The economic development of the Sui Dynasty mainly manifested itself in the enormous increase of arable land and agricultural yields. As people's living standards improved, the national tax revenue greatly exceeded that of the past. In the official granaries in Chang'an and Luoyang, enormous amounts of grain were stored, enough to last the government for many years. Handicrafts assimilated foreign technologies, and commerce boomed, if only for a while.

In order to consolidate the unification and to strengthen the link between the south and the north, Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty directed the building of the Grand Canal. The Grand Canal, the longest



The Grand Canal connecting southern and northern China

man-made canal in the world at the time, measured four to five thousand *li* in length and linked southern and northern China. It started from the eastern capital Luoyang, ran to the Tong command (the present Beijing) in the northeast and to Yuhang (the present Hangzhou) in the southeast, and was composed of four sections—the Yongji Channel, the Tongji Channel, the Kan Trench and the River south of the Yangtze River. The opening up of the Grand Canal, comparable to the construction of the Great Wall, had a profound impact on the shaping of Chinese history.

In the reign of Emperor Yang, a series of enormous public works was undertaken. However, the subsequent exploitation of manpower, and draining of resources undermined the social economy and threatened political stability. The war between the Sui Dynasty and the Koryos brought great suffering to the people. Excessive military service and corvée labor led to social upheaval. To avoid military service and corvée labor, peasants were forced to leave their land and move to other parts of the country. Famine, caused by the under use of farmland and natural disasters, destroyed the previously stable economy.

In 611, the peasants in the Changbai Mountains in Shandong

Province were the first to rise in revolt, followed by people everywhere. The political order of the Sui Dynasty soon crumbled. The rebellious peasants slowly converged into several big groups, mostly because of the Wagang Rebellion on the Central Plains. They sacked and raided cities, opened the state granaries as well as the barns in Luoyang, and thus directly threatened the city of Luoyang. In 618, Emperor Yang was killed in Jiangdu by his general. The Sui Dynasty collapsed after only thirty-seven years of reign.

### **The Establishment of the Tang Dynasty and the Zhenguan Administration**

When the upheaval at the end of the Sui Dynasty became more and more intense, many Sui officials and aristocrats joined the revolt against the Sui Dynasty. Of these, the most famous was Li Yuan (566–635), a commander of the Taiyuan Garrison. In May 617, Li Yuan, together with his eldest son, Li Jiancheng, and his second son, Li Shimin (599–649), rose in rebellion in Taiyuan. They conquered Chang'an in November. In the following year, Li Yuan proclaimed himself emperor and established the Tang Dynasty, made Chang'an the capital and became Emperor Gaozu of the Tang Dynasty. Soon afterwards with the assistance of Li Shimin and over nearly ten years of hard campaigning, Li Yuan wiped out the warlords in the country and restored a unified political order.

In 626, Li Shimin staged a mutiny at the Xuanwu Gate to the Palace, killed the crown prince Jiancheng and forced Emperor Gaozu Li Yuan to designate him crown prince. Li Yuan soon abdicated the throne to Li Shimin, who became Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty and adopted Zhenguan as the title of his reign. In the years of Emperor Gaozu's reign, the political situation in the country gradually improved and the agricultural economy in the north, which had been devastated by war, also slowly recovered. In addition, Emperor Gaozu laid down the basic framework of the political institutions of the Tang Dynasty during the last years of his reign. All this laid a solid foundation for the best years of the Tang Dynasty.

The Tang Dynasty retained the Three Departments and Six Ministries. The central government consisted of the Imperial Secretariat, the Imperial Chancellery and the Department of State Affairs, with their respective directors making up the central decision-making institution. The Imperial Secretariat and the Imperial Chancellery were responsible



Emperor Taizong  
(Tang Dynasty)

for the draft and review of the state doctrines, while the Department of State Affairs was in charge of the Six Ministries, including the Ministries of Officials, Register, Rites, Military Affairs, Justice and Public Works, which functioned as administrative institutions responsible for implementing central decisions. From its beginning, the system of the Three Provinces and Six Ministries was frequently modified as the political situation developed and social conditions changed.

The Zhenguan era of Emperor Taizong saw the birth of the historically renowned “Zhenguan Administration.” Emperor Taizong was a monarch of great talent and vision, who lived through

the sudden collapse of the Sui Dynasty; he was deeply impressed by the people who refused to tolerate the harsh government and who rose in revolt. In his reign, he paid special attention to the lessons of history and stressed the importance of benevolent government. He believed that the masses related to the ruler in much the same way as a vessel does to water, in that “the water can both float and capsize a vessel.” He employed virtuous officials and widely solicited opinions. At that time, a number of outstanding officials in the royal court dared to offend the emperor by giving frank advice, the most famous one of whom was Wei Zheng (580–643). The book *Essentials of Government of the Zhenguan Era* records many anecdotes and arguments between Emperor Taizong and his ministers over state affairs, which reflected the enlightened political atmosphere in the Tang imperial court at the time. In the Zhenguan era, the reform of national policies aimed to meet the practical needs of the society; the system of equal land allocation initiated in the Northern Wei Dynasty was retained as the land system; and the system of payment in kind and labor was put into effect for taxation—each peasant was given an equal amount of land and had to pay three kinds of taxes—in grain,

in corvée labor and military service and in textiles or other materials, which contributed to the revival and growth of agricultural production. Emperor Taizong enforced an open policy in such fields as religion and arts and made a great effort to assimilate aspects of foreign culture, which resulted in the flourishing of both culture and the arts in the Tang Dynasty. During this period, social stability, political enlightenment, a booming economy, increased national strength and prosperity and the defeat of the Eastern Turks who had long threatened the northern borders—all these won the esteem and appreciation of contemporary and later generations.

### Empress Wu Zetian

After Emperor Taizong died, the crown prince Li Zhi (628–683) succeeded the throne. Li Zhi became Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty. Wu Zetian was the second empress of Emperor Gaozong. She was a woman of beauty and shrewdness. After many setbacks, she won the internecine court wars for power and was entitled Empress. As Emperor Gaozong was often ill, Wu Zetian often handled state affairs on his behalf. With her extraordinary political talent, she gradually gained dominance over court politics.



Empress Wu Zetian  
(Tang Dynasty)

After Emperor Gaozong died, Wu Zetian put two of her sons, one after another, on the throne, holding the power for state affairs in her own hands. Eventually dissatisfied with this situation, she deposed them and made herself empress. In 690, Wu Zetian publicly proclaimed herself as empress, changed the name of the Dynasty to Zhou and made Luoyang its capital—the Divine Capital. After consolidating her power, she reformed the system of recruiting officials; strengthened the civil service

examination system created in the Sui Dynasty (which had a great impact on the development of the examination system); focused attention on the production of agriculture; constantly gave orders to free slaves; and suppressed and destroyed the hierarchical official system in the north. In her reign, society was stable, the economy continued to develop, national strength was greatly improved, culture bloomed, and the registered population greatly increased. Empress Wu Zetian is renowned worldwide as being a ruler of remarkable ability.

Wu Zetian's Zhou Dynasty lasted fifteen years. In 705, supported by the ministers, the descendants of the Li family forced the aged Wu Zetian to abdicate the throne and restored the Tang Dynasty.

### **Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and the Prosperity of the Kaiyuan Era**

Several years after Wu Zetian died, her grandson Li Longji (685–762) ascended the throne and became Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty. The early years of Emperor Xuanzong's reign, the Kaiyuan era, saw the Emperor Xuanzong try every possible means to rule effectively. He employed virtuous chancellors, simplified administrative structures, cut down expenses, strengthened the supervision of local officials, reformed their administration and took a series of innovative and effective measures to solve political, economic and military problems.

In the Kaiyuan era, the national strength of the Tang Dynasty reached its acme, with its military and political influence over the border areas and the ethnic minority groups exceeding any previous period in history. A highly developed material civilization and a flowering culture created a centripetal force appealing to the ethnic minority groups in the border areas. The Tang Dynasty was the strongest country in the world, as well as the bridge to, and center of, economic and cultural exchange among the Asian countries, occupying a prominent place in the contact between China and the West. Cultural growth, unprecedented economic prosperity, political enlightenment, a greater variety of goods and wealthy people marked the grandeur of the time, known as the "Prosperity of the Kaiyuan Era"—a second splendid period in Chinese history, after Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty.

### **The Frontier Ethnic Minority Groups in the Tang Dynasty**

In the Tang Dynasty, the northern grasslands were controlled by

the Turks and the Huihes. The Turks emerged in the late Northern Dynasties and had split into the Eastern Turks and the Western Turks by the time of the Sui Dynasty. They frequently marched south to raid the agricultural areas of the Tang Dynasty. Emperor Taizong restored his political control over the northern grasslands after defeating the Eastern Turks. Later, the Western Turks also accepted the ruling of the Tang emperor. The Tang Dynasty set up the Anxi Protectorate and the Beiting Protectorate in the Western Regions, effectively controlling the area south and north of the Tianshan Mountains and west of the Amur River, the Altay Mountains and the Balkhash Lake.

The Huihes originally lived along the Selun'ge River and prospered in the mid-eighth century, when they almost controlled the grasslands extending from the Heilongjiang River in the east to the Altay Mountains in the west. The Huihe chief Gulipeiluo accepted the title of Huairen Khan, which means "a Benevolent Khan" conferred by the Tang emperor. Soon afterwards, the Huihes changed their name to "Huihu." In the middle of the ninth century, the Huihus migrated to the west, forming the Huihus in the Western Prefecture around the Turpan area and the Huihus in the Gansu Prefecture in the Hexi Corridor. The Huihus are the ancestors of today's Uygurs ethnic minority group.

In the valleys of the Heilongjiang River, the Songhua River and the Wusuli River lived the Mohe tribes. After the mid-seventh century, the Mohe tribes in Heishui and Sumo grew more powerful. The Heishui Mohe lived in the north and began to send tributes to the Tang Dynasty in the reign of Emperor Taizong. In the early eighth century, the Tang Dynasty set up the Heishui Protectorate. At the end of the seventh century, the chief Da Zuerong united the various groups of the Sumo Mohe in the south. In 713, he accepted the title King of the Bohai Prefecture conferred by the Tang Dynasty and established the Bohai State.

Around the Erhai Lake in Yunnan Province gradually emerged Nanzhao, one of the important frontier ethnic minority groups in the Tang Dynasty. The Nanzhao was the ancestor group of the Yi and Bai ethnic minorities. Originally there were six groups, known as the Six Zhaos, with the group in the southernmost called Nanzhao. With the aid of Emperor Taizong, the chief of the Nanzhao united the other five Zhaos, and was conferred the title King of Yunnan. Under the influence of the advanced inland culture, Nanzhao's economy and culture were rapidly transformed.



Tubo was the ancestor group of the present Tibetans. In the early seventh century, the Tubo Zambo (king) Songzan Gambo united the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, made Losha (the present Lhasa) the political center and established a powerful Tubo regime. In 641, Emperor Taizong sent an envoy to accompany Princess Wencheng to Tubo to marry Songzan Gambo. Princess Wencheng took vegetable seeds, handicraft products and books on medicine and technology to Tubo. Soon, various types of craftsmen moved into Tubo in a steady stream. This stimulated Tubo's economic progress. Later, many wars broke out between the Tubo regime and the Tang Dynasty and the Tubo army marched as far as Chang'an. The intermittent outbreaks of war and peace between the Tubo regime and the Tang Dynasty deepened their understanding and promoted economic exchange. In the early ninth century, the Tubo regime and the Tang Dynasty formed an alliance. The treaty stressed that the Tang Dynasty and the Tubo regime would "share hardships and avoid violence." The monument to this alliance still stands in front of the Dazhao Temple in Lhasa today.

### **Foreign Relations in the Tang Dynasty**

Economic and cultural exchanges between the Tang Dynasty and Asian and European countries grew, with the Silk Road over land and communication and trade by sea unusually busy. By the land route, people could reach the Korean Peninsula in the east, and India, Iran and the Arabian countries in the west by way of Dunhuang, overpassing the Chongling Mountains. By the sea routes, people could travel to Korea and Japan in the east, to the Malaysian Peninsula in the south from Guangzhou, and west to India and the Persian Gulf area. Chang'an was one of the most important cosmopolitan cities in the world. Other important centers of traffic included Yangzhou, Guangzhou and Dunhuang.

Silla (an important country on the Korean Peninsula) and Japan maintained very close ties with the Tang Dynasty. Both countries sent a number of students to China during the Tang Dynasty to study its advanced culture and technology, among whom the Japanese "envoys to the Tang Dynasty" were the best known. The famous Tang monk Jianzhen sailed east to Japan and greatly influenced the development of Buddhism there. Tang culture also had an impact in Japan and Korea, especially in politics and economics, city architecture, writing, and everyday life. Since the introduction of Buddhism during the Han

Dynasty, economic and cultural contacts between China and South Asia, particularly India, had grown more frequent, in part due to the Indian monks who came to China and the Chinese monks who journeyed west as pilgrims. The renowned monk Xuanzang, in the reign of Emperor Taizong, overcame many obstacles and endured much hardship to journey to India to study Buddhism. He traveled across India and won respect from the Buddhist authorities there for his outstanding learning. He took over six hundred Buddhist texts back with him to China and translated some of them into Chinese. He was one of the most outstanding travelers and translators of the Buddhist texts in Chinese history.



Monk Xuanzang  
(Tang Dynasty)

The Tang Dynasty was also very close to Persia (present day Iran) and Dashi (present day Arabia). A large number of Persian and Dashi merchants had business in the interior of China. They brought with them many goods from the West and introduced religions from Central Asia and the West Asia into China (including Nestorian Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism). Chinese goods were very popular with the people in Persia and Dashi. Merchants, monks and envoys continuously traveled on the Silk Road, which was an important arena for foreign relations during the Tang Dynasty.

### **The An-Shi Rebellion and the Warlord Culture of Military Commands**

In the Tianbao era, Emperor Xuanzong slowly transformed into an emperor who indulged himself in lavish spending. Worse, he showed



Territory of the Tang Dynasty (741)

special favor to fraudulent and treacherous ministers. The corruption in the royal family and the relatives of the empress led to political upheaval. Behind the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty a serious crisis was developing. The An-Shi Rebellion was the turning point for the decline of the Tang Dynasty.

An Lushan (?–757) and Shi Siming (?–761) were originally frontier generals during the Tang Dynasty. As a consequence of the failure of recruiting professional soldiers, the Tang army relied too heavily on the generals and soldiers from the frontier ethnic minority groups, whose dependency on the head of the military commands and the regional military governors, increased. The power of the regional military governors was so great that they gained control over the local military and administrative and financial affairs and began to ignore the central government. In 755, An Lushan, the regional military governor who was in charge of the area in the present Hebei Province, Shanxi Province and Liaoning Province, took advantage of the political turmoil and the weak inland military force, to rise in rebellion in Fanyang (the present Beijing).

The rebellious army soon conquered the two capitals of the Tang Dynasty, Luoyang and Chang'an. Emperor Xuanzong was forced to flee and organize counter attacks from other areas. Two years later, with the assistance of the Huihe soldiers, the Tang generals Guo Ziyi and Li Guangbi regained the capital. After An Lushan died, his lieutenant, Shi Siming, rose in revolt once more. It was not until 763 that the rebellion was put down by the Tang army.

The An-Shi Rebellion seriously sabotaged agricultural production in the north of China. Many people were made homeless. Within several hundred *li* around Luoyang, many prefectures and counties were laid waste. As a result, the Tang Dynasty went from prosperity to decline.

Another serious political consequence of the An-Shi Rebellion was that it resulted in the warlordism of military commands. During the An-Shi Rebellion and later, the regional military governors took the opportunity to enlarge their own domains and armies, which led to the emergence of a warlord culture. Many regional military governors were, in name, head of the Tang military command, but in effect, lords of these "independent kingdoms." They passed none of the collected taxes to the imperial treasury, appointed local officials in their own domains and installed their sons and generals as successors after they died. In face of this, the imperial court was powerless.

The warlordism of military commands lasted for over a century. Political and military conflicts often broke out between the military commands, and between the military commands and the central government. This further weakened the national power of the Tang Dynasty and was one of the main reasons why the Dynasty was doomed.

### **Adjustments Plus Reforms and the Revival in the Yuanhe Era**

After the An-Shi Rebellion was suppressed, the Tang government, beginning with Emperor Daizong, began to adopt measures to stabilize the situation and to restore law and order. Liu Yan, a famous financial expert in the late Tang Dynasty, made some positive contributions to reform the national finance and economy after the An-Shi Rebellion.

However, since the mid-Tang Dynasty, with the development of the economy and the accumulation of social wealth, land had been frequently sold and bought; worse still, too much land had been annexed—the system of equal land allocation had been violated. The system of payment in kind and labor could not be sustained. The country

was faced with a financial crisis, which was intensified after the An-Shi Rebellion. To solve the crisis, the Tang government accepted the advice of Prime Minister Yang Yan in 780 and adopted the Double-tax System. According to this system, taxes were collected twice a year, in summer and in autumn, mainly on the basis of the amount of land and property owned—hence its name. The Double-tax System differed from the previous taxation standard, which was mainly based on the number of people in a family. It was an important innovation in the taxation system and had a far-reaching effect in subsequent Chinese history. The enforcement of the Double-tax System secured the Tang government a basic flow of revenue, thanks to which it managed to survive various difficulties.

In the later years of his reign, Emperor Dezong implemented policies to appease the warlords in the military commands. At the same time, he weakened the military command of governors who aspired to be warlords. As a result, the relationship between the central government and the regional military commands was changed to some extent. Great progress was made in reinforcing the imperial army, strengthening defenses in the border areas, and increasing the central fiscal reserve.

Due to the rise of the middle and lower classes, the examination system was adjusted in the later reign of Emperor Dezong. Numbers of scholars, who cared about the common people, understood the importance of quality of life, and who worked for the long-term interests of the Tang Dynasty, were recruited. The efforts of these scholars stimulated political reform and encouraged the growth of literature and the arts. The reign of Xianzong, in the early Yuanhe era, saw the reforms of the Two Princes and Eight Ministers, which included further reforms to the political system. In the Yuanhe era, politics was relatively enlightened, production improved and, in particular, the warlord culture in Hebei was destroyed. This was the time of the Revival of the Yuanhe Era.

### **The Monopolization of Power by the Eunuchs and the Dissention between Parties**

The Revival of the Yuanhe Era did not last long. After Emperor Muzong succeeded to the throne, the military commanders in Hebei revolted once again. This time, the Tang Dynasty could not suppress the rebellion and the situation reached deadlock. The power struggle within the ruling class intensified. The evolution of the relationship between court

officials, eunuchs and military commanders constituted the mainstream of late Tang politics.

Eunuchs were the side-products of the autocratic imperial power. During the process of reforming the political system and strengthening the autocratic power of the emperor in the late Tang Dynasty, the eunuchs grew increasingly powerful. They not only controlled the state power, but also took charge of the imperial forbidden army, formulated national policies, appointed or removed court officials and, ultimately, deposed or appointed emperors. The monopolization of power by eunuchs drove the politics of the Tang Dynasty further into turmoil and corruption.

“The Dissention between Parties” referred to the two groups of aristocrats in the Tang Dynasty who plotted against each other in the struggle for power. From the reign of Emperor Xianzong, serious splits had occurred among the aristocrats and scholar-officials in the court, with one group headed by Niu Sengru (the Niu Party), and the other group led by Li Deyu (the Li Party). Their actions resulted in the disintegration of the ruling class and accelerated the final downfall of the Tang Dynasty.

### **Peasant Uprisings at the End of the Tang Dynasty and the Collapse of the Tang Dynasty**

The political chaos at the end of the Tang Dynasty intensified the social conflicts which had been building up for some time. The Tang rulers were so obsessed with the power struggle that they paid no attention to the brewing conflict. The enforcement of the Double-tax System resulted in many new problems; for example, land annexation became more serious and, as the new taxation rules were not forcefully implemented, the exploitation of the peasants worsened. Those peasants who had lost their land began to air their grievances in the form of violent action.

In 859, Qiu Fu led a peasant uprising in the east of Zhejiang Province. In 868, frontier soldiers’ mutiny, which was led by Pang Sun, evolved into a large-scale peasant uprising. At the end of 874, Wang Xianzhi led thousands of peasants in Shandong and Henan in a rebellion in Changyuan, which was quickly followed by Huang Chao’s uprising. After Wang Xianzhi died, Huang Chao led his great army in battles across more than half of China, becoming more and more powerful. In 880, his army occupied Luoyang and entered Chang’an early the next year. Huang Chao set up a regime called Daqi.

But the remaining army of the Tang Dynasty began to fight back. In 883, Huang Chao was forced to retreat from Chang'an and committed suicide near Mountain Tai after he was defeated in the following year. However, Huang Chao's army deeply undermined the Tang Dynasty. Soon after Huang Chao's death, the Tang Dynasty, which has a glorious chapter in Chinese history, came to an end, thanks to the military warlords.



CHAPTER FOUR

**CHINA DURING THE SONG, YUAN,  
MING AND QING DYNASTIES**

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Free-style calligraphy of “史” (*shǐ*) means “history” in Chinese



Timeline	Dynasty	China's major events	World's major events	Timeline	Dynasty	China's major events	World's major events
900	Five Dynasties (907–960)	947 Establishment of Liao		1200	Liao, Western Xia, Jin (902–1234)	1279 Song Emperor, Zhao Bing, committed suicide; Southern Song collapsed	1204 Fourth Crusade
950				Tan Kingdoms (902–979)	1250		Southern Song (1127–1279)
1000	Northern Song (960–1127)	960–1127 Rise of trademarks, advertisements and paper currencies	1001 The Vikings arrived at Newfoundland of North America from Greenland	1300	Yuan (1271–1368)	1298 Metal (tin) movable type printing system invented	1275 Marco Polo visited China
1050		Liao, Western Xia, Jin (902–1234)	1023 Banknotes issued by central bank	1350		1320 Renaissance began in Europe	
1100	Southern Song (1127–1279)	1038 Establishment of Western Xia	1096 First Crusade	1400	Ming (1368–1644)	1404–1408 The largest ancient encyclopedia <i>Yongle Encyclopedia</i> was compiled	1337 Hundred Years' War began
1150		1069 Wang Anshi's Reform	1100 Medieval universities founded in Europe	1450		1348 Europe devastated by the Black Death	
1200		1125 Jin conquered Liao	1150 First papermaking workshop established in Europe (Spain)	1500		1405–1433 The Seven Voyages of Zheng He	1452–1519 Leonardo da Vinci
		1127 Jingkang Incident; downfall of Northern Song					1492 Christopher Columbus discovered America
		1142 Yue Fei died					1498 Vasco da Gama explored a sea route from Europe to India
		1200 Zhu Xi died	1189 Paper mill built in France				

Timeline	Dynasty	China's major events	World's major events	Timeline	Dynasty	China's major events	World's major events
1500	Ming (1368-1644)	1529 Wang Shouren died  1596 Li Shizhen's medical book, <i>The Great Pharmacopoeia</i> 1603-1607 Translation and publication of a geometry book by Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi  1662-1722 Kangxi Period  1723-1735 Yongzheng Period 1735-1795 Qianlong Period  1782 Completion of Vol.1 of <i>Si Ku Quan Shu</i> 1791 Publication of <i>A Dream of Red Mansion</i> (120 chapters)	1520 Ferdinand Magellan sailed across the Pacific Ocean 1521 Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation 1564-1616 William Shakespeare 1564-1642 Galileo Galilei 1596-1650 Rene Descartes 1609 Tokugawa bakufu was established and started ruling Japan 1610 Scientific Revolution began 1645-1660 Cromwell and the English Revolution 1685-1750 Johann Sebastian Bach 1687 Isaac Newton wrote "Philosophiæ Natwralis Principia Mathematica" 1724-1804 Immanuel Kant 1733-1880 Industrial Revolution 1756-1791 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1769 James Watt invented steam engine 1770-1827 Ludwig van Beethoven 1776 United States Declaration of Independence 1789 The French Revolution began	1800	Qing (1644-1911)	1810 British missionary Robert Morrison printed <i>The Arts of the Apostles</i> in Canton 1840 The outbreak of Opium War 1842 Signed the Treaty of Nanjing 1850-1864 Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace 1898 Publication of "Evolution and Ethics" 1989 Hundred Days' Reform launched and failed at last 1900 Allied Army of the Eight Powers invaded China at Beijing 1911 The Revolution of 1911 succeeded and built the Republic of China 1919 The outbreak of May-Fourth Movement 1921 The Communist Party in China was established 1937-1945 The Second Sino-Japanese War 1949 The establishment of People's Republic of China	1804 Napoléon Bonaparte became the Emperor of the French 1818-1883 Karl Heinrich Marx 1821 Michael Faraday invented motor and generator 1848 The Manifesto of the Communist Party 1859 Evolutionism, by Charles Robert Darwin 1861-1865 American Civil War 1868 Meiji Restoration of Japan 1876 Alexander Graham Bell invented telephone 1894 Outbreak of First Sino-Japanese War 1905 Albert Einstein proposed the Theory of Relativity and Law of the Photoelectric Effect 1914-1918 The First World War 1939-1945 The Second World War 1945 The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
1550			1850				
1600			1900				
1650			1950				
1700							
1750							
1800							

## The Song Dynasty

### **From the Mutiny at Chenqiao to Disarmament over a Cup of Wine**

From 907 to 979, China fell again into a period of division, historically known as the Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms. This period covered the five small courts and ten small warlord regimes between the Tang and Song dynasties. The Five Dynasties included the Later Liang, the Later Tang, the Later Jin, the Later Han and the Later Zhou. Except for the Later Tang, which made Luoyang its capital, the rest established their capital in Kaifeng. The Ten Kingdoms were the regimes of Wu, Southern Tang, Wuyue, Min, Southern Han, Chu, Nanping, Former Shu, the Later Shu and Northern Han. With the exception of the Northern Han in the north, the other nine kingdoms were all in the south of China.

In 960, Zhao Kuangyin, the Later Zhou's general, led a mutiny at Chenqiao station northwest of Dongjing (the present Kaifeng, Henan Province). His army marched to Dongjing, seized the throne of the Later Zhou and established the Song Dynasty, known as the Northern Song Dynasty. Zhao Kuangyin became the first emperor, Emperor Taizu, of the Song Dynasty. It took Emperor Taizu and his brother Emperor Taizong over ten years to gradually exterminate the other warlords and put an end to the turmoil caused by warlords during the Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms.

In the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, in order to consolidate his power, Emperor Taizu took several measures to strengthen the central authority. First, he removed the military generals from power. He did this by holding a banquet, during which he hinted that warlords such as Shi Shouxin should hand over their military power. Shi Shouxin and the other generals, recognizing Taizu's superior military strength, heeded his hint and resigned from office, claiming to be ill. This was the famous "Disarmament over a Cup of Wine" incident. Second, the emperor removed the regional military governors from office. Third, he sent civil officials to the prefectures to take charge of regional administrative affairs. Fourth, he assigned finance commissioners to manage regional financial affairs. Last, he chose the strongest soldiers from the regional forces to form the imperial guards, who were under his direct control. Through these measures, the regional administrative, financial and military power was again under the control of the central

authority. However, this did lead to the expansion of bureaucratic institutions as well as significantly increase the size of the military. This, in turn, meant that more money had to be allocated from the treasury to both the administration and the military. Another effect of centralization was that regional governors' power was weakened.

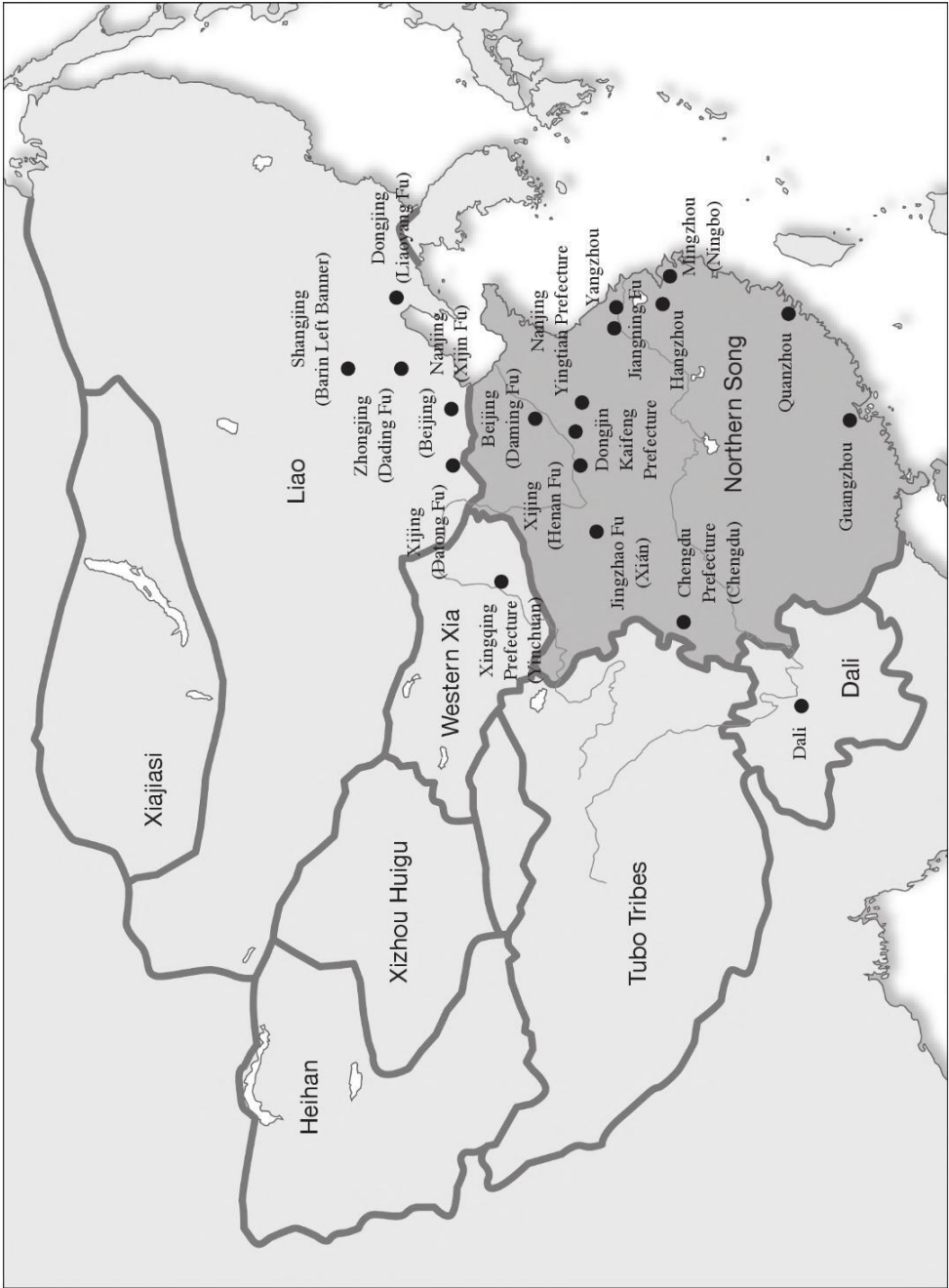
### **The Advancement in Economy and the Prosperity of the Cities**

The Northern Song Dynasty saw big advancements in social economy, notably in agriculture, industry and commerce.

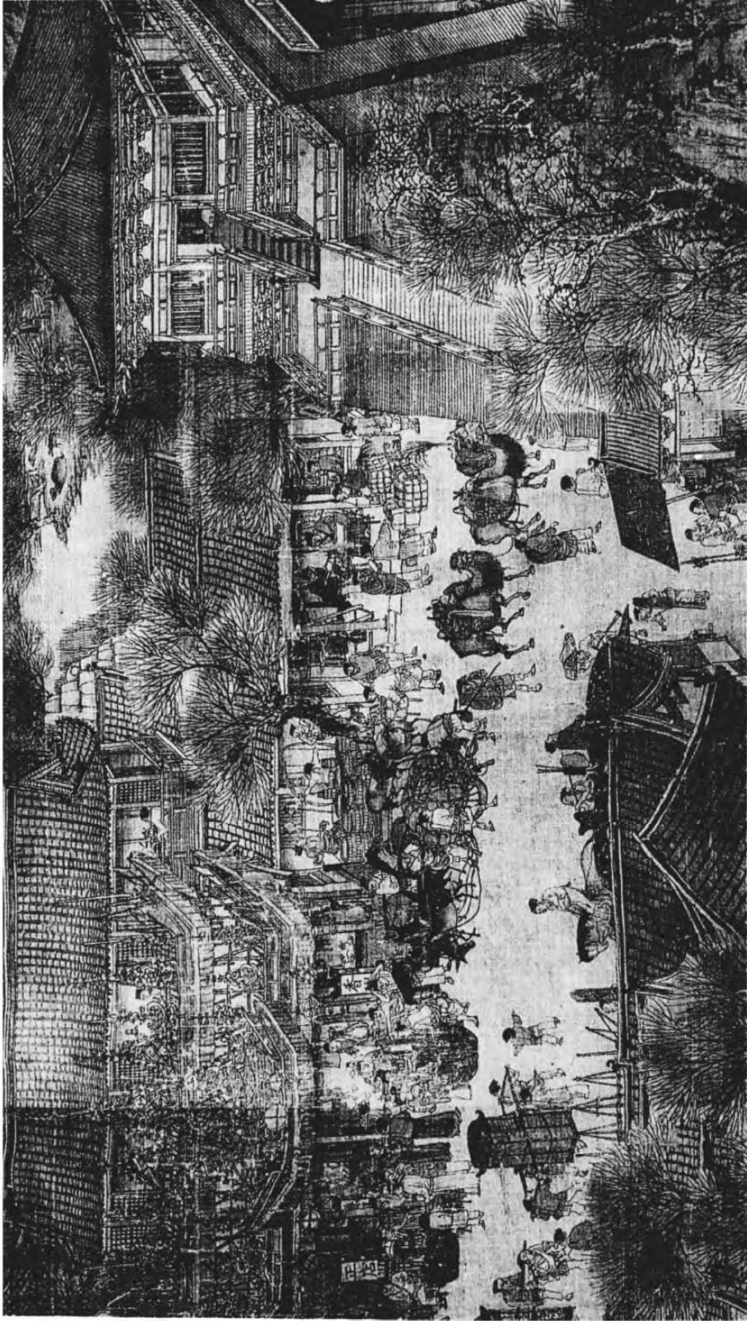
In agriculture, some crops were more widely planted, for instance, millet, wheat, broomcorn millet and beans, introduced from the north of the Huai River and planted in the south of the Yangtze River, as well as in Guangdong and Guangxi. The Champa strain of rice, introduced from Vietnam, was already being grown in Fujian in the time of the Northern Song Dynasty, when the government encouraged the people of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and the Huai River valley to grow it. Tea production also increased; many new tea plantations were established in the hills of Fujian and in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

In the handicraft industry, Sichuan still led the country in silk-weaving techniques, though the silk weaving industry south of the Yangtze River had already overtaken that of the north. The styles and varieties of silk products also increased and further progress was made in dyeing techniques. The porcelain-making industry was so advanced that more than thirty kilns were operational. The white porcelain from the Ding kilns and the white-blue porcelain from the Ru kilns were famous. Porcelain made in Jingdezhen was smooth in texture and rich in color and it, too, was renowned. The mining and metallurgy industries were further developed; at this time people in both cities and the country in Shanxi and Dongjing were using coal as fuel. The use of coal to smelt iron increased; there were over thirty smelting workshops, employing approximately four thousand craftsmen, in the iron-smelting center in the northeast of Xuzhou alone. Iron-smelting techniques and quality improved, which meant that agricultural tools were stronger and more durable.

Commerce flourished, as the agricultural and handicraft industries developed, and the cultivation of cash crops such as tea and sugar cane expanded and cities in the Northern Song Dynasty grew prosperous. At this time, villages in both the south and in the north, regular village fairs



Liao and Northern Song Dynasties (1111)



Part of the painting "Along the River During the Ching Ming Festival," work of artist Zhang Zeduan (Northern Song Dynasty)

were a common event. In the cities, business sections and living quarters were no longer strictly segregated, as craftsmen and businessmen opened shop houses on the main streets, doing business whenever convenient and forming a cityscape similar to that in cities today. Rice, grains, wheat, beans, chickens, fish, vegetables, fruit, wood, charcoal, chinaware, bamboo products, silk, cotton, cloth, silk fabrics, clothes, shoes, pigs, sheep, horses, cattle, monkeys and mules were all sold there. Copper, iron, gold and silver coins were widely used in the markets. In the early Northern Song Dynasty, *jiaozi*, the world's first easily carried paper money, was introduced in Sichuan. It also encouraged the growth of commerce.

### **The Establishment of Liao, and Western Xia and their Relationship to the Northern Song Dynasty**

In the early stages of the Northern Song Dynasty, two regimes established by the Liao and the Western Xia, ethnic minority groups in the north, posed serious threats to the stability of the dynasty.

The Khitan, a nomadic tribe, originally settled along the upper reaches of the Liao River and lived by fishing and hunting. In the Northern Wei Dynasty, they were in close contact with the inhabitants on the Central Plains, exchanging horses and leather with the Han people. Towards the end of the Tang Dynasty, the Khitans continued to expand their influence. From the Han people, the Khitans learned to cultivate land, to spin and weave, to smelt iron, to produce salt, and to build cities and houses, beginning an agrarian and settled way of life. At the beginning of the tenth century, the Khitan chieftain Yelü Abaoji, unified the Khitan groups. In 916, Abaoji proclaimed himself emperor, established the Khitan Kingdom, with its capital in Shangjing (south of the present Barin Left Banner in Inner Mongolia). In 947, the Khitans changed the name of their regime to Liao. The Northern Song Dynasty launched two campaigns against Liao, but was twice defeated. In the autumn of 1004, the Liao army launched a large-scale attack on the Northern Song Dynasty, with its front army reaching Chanzhou (the present Puyang County in Henan province) along the Yellow River, threatening Song's capital city Kaifeng. In the following year, Song and Liao formed the Chanyuan Alliance—Liao agreed to withdraw its army, and the Northern Song Dynasty agreed to send an annual tribute of 100,000 *liang* (or *tael*, Chinese system of weights, one *liang* equals about 40 grams) of silver and 200,000 bolts (a standard unit of length for the fabric industry, 1

bolt of cloth equals about 36 meters) of silk. Thereafter, Song and Liao maintained a lasting peace and engaged in both economic and cultural exchanges.

Western Xia was a regime set up by the Dangxiang tribe, one branch of an old ethnic minority group, the Qiang from west China, who settled in Ningxia, Gansu and northwest Shaanxi, maintaining a nomadic life style. By the time of the Five Dynasties at the end of the Tang Dynasty, the Dangxiang tribe was powerful. At the beginning of the Northern Song Dynasty, Dangxiang's chieftain assumed the title of king over the Xia Kingdom. In 1038, the Xia king, Yuanhao, proclaimed himself emperor of Great Xia, with its capital in Xingqing (the present Yinchuan in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region), known then as Western Xia. Yuanhao's assumption of the title of emperor set off years of war between Xia and Song, with heavy losses on both sides. Later, the two sides signed a peace treaty—the Northern Song Dynasty sent an annual tribute to Western Xia and reopened the border to trade; Western Xia nullified the title of emperor, while the Song Dynasty conferred on its chieftain the title of king.

### **Qingli New Policies and Wang Anshi's Reforms**

As a result of the expansion of the bureaucratic institutions, the ever-growing military and the years of warfare, a series of political crises faced the mid-Northern Song Dynasty. Military spending and the financial needs of the bureaucracy reached such heights that the state revenue could not meet the demand. This was exacerbated by the fact that many of the bureaucrats were corrupt, state levies and taxes were exorbitant and the bulk of the land was once again in the hands of the powerful landowners. With the political and social situation deteriorating, peasant uprisings were frequent. Liao and Western Xia continued to threaten the Northern Song Dynasty, which had to pay burdensome annual tributes.

To try to resolve the political crises, from the third year of Qingli (1043) in the reign of Emperor Renzong of the Song Dynasty, Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu, and other statesmen attempted to reform the administration. However, because of resistance from the conservative faction, the “Qingli New Policies,” as they were known, were not as effective as had been anticipated. In 1069, Emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty appointed Wang Anshi to put his reform measures into



practice in the hope that they would alleviate the conflicts in society, increase revenue and strengthen the army. The reform mainly involved the Young Shoots Law, the Farmland and Hydraulic Projects Law, the Service Exemption Law, the Land Survey and Equitable Taxation Law and the Baojia Law.

The new laws of Wang Anshi, which were enforced for more than ten years, produced some positive results. For example, after the Farmland and Hydraulic Projects Law was implemented, over ten thousand irrigation systems were built and a huge amount of farmland was irrigated, leading to an increase in state revenue. However, owing to inappropriate employment of certain officials, the interests of the common people were adversely affected in the course of this reform. The new laws also reduced the privileges enjoyed by the big landowners and bureaucrats, who strongly opposed the laws. After Emperor Shenzong died, Sima Guang, who was appointed Prime Minister in 1086, abolished almost all the new laws. But when Emperor Zhezong, the son of Emperor Shenzong himself attended to state affairs, he reintroduced such major new laws as the Young Shoots Law and Exemption of Services. However, his actions resulted in factional struggles, which took no account of such goals as restraining the powerful from annexing land and reviving agricultural production.

### **Political Corruption Towards the End of the Northern Song Dynasty**

The first twenty-five years of the twelfth century saw the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty. The emperor promoted calligraphy, painting and the arts, but was himself debauched and tyrannous. His favorite ministers and eunuchs tried every possible means to extort the people to pay for his extravagant desires. They also accepted bribes and conferred official titles for money, acting in defiance of the law and public opinion. The spending on luxury and extravagance meant that the state revenue was depleted, with the annual revenue lasting only eight or nine months. In order to raise fiscal income, the government began to take over unoccupied land and deem it to be public land. In fact, they often used violence to seize fertile land, the original owners of which were forced to become tenants and pay rent and taxes to the government. Many bureaucrats and powerful landowners also took advantage of this opportunity to wantonly seize other people's land.

As a result, social and political unrest intensified. It was under such circumstances that peasant uprisings, led by Fang La in the south and Song Jiang in the north, broke out towards the end of the Northern Song Dynasty.

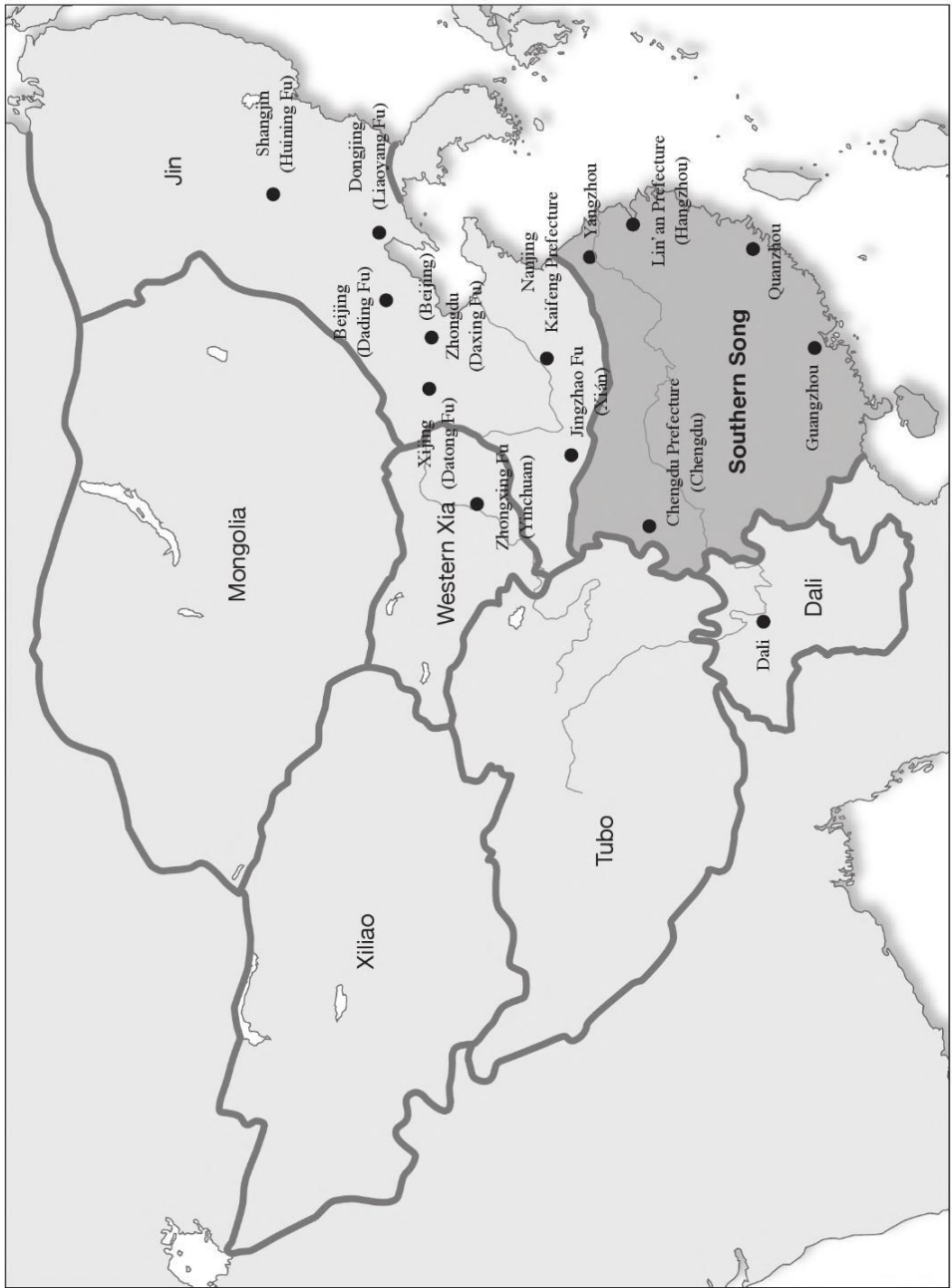
### **The Rise of the Nüzhen and the Crush of Liao by Jin**

When the Northern Song Dynasty was challenged by peasant uprisings, the ethnic minority regimes in the north once again became a threat. After the Khitan Kingdom was established, it subdued the Heishui Mohe, who used to live along the Heilongjiang River and the Songhua River and in the Changbai Mountains. They were known to the Khitans as the Nüzhen. The Khitan Liao extorted hunting eagles and other local goods from them. In the eleventh century, the Wanyan tribe of the Nüzhen group prospered and gradually unified the other Nüzhen tribes. Together, they launched armed attacks against Liao and conquered much of Liao's territory. In 1115, the Nüzhen chieftain Wanyan Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and established the Jin Dynasty. Thereafter, Jin, in collaboration with Song, launched attacks against Liao from the north and the south. In 1125, the Jin army captured Liao's emperor, and so ended the Liao Dynasty.

### **The Jingkang Incident and the Anti-Jin Wars in the Early Southern Song Dynasty**

After ending the Liao Dynasty, the Jin Dynasty turned its attention to the Northern Song Dynasty, which was both corrupt and badly defended. Therefore, in the winter of the year when Liao was defeated, Jin marched south and launched a large-scale attack against the Northern Song Dynasty. In the following spring, the Jin army crossed the Yellow River and closed in on Dongjing. Emperor Huizong was so panic-stricken that he hurriedly gave the throne to his son, who became Emperor Qinzong. In 1127, the Jin army sacked Dongjing and took up to three thousand prisoners, including Emperor Huizong, Emperor Qinzong, concubines, members of the royal clans and ministers. The Northern Song Dynasty collapsed. The title of Emperor Qinzong's reign was Jingkang, so the event came to be known as the "Jingkang Incident."

In the same year as the Northern Song Dynasty ended, Emperor Qinzong's brother, Zhao Gou, crowned himself emperor in Yingtian Prefecture (the present Shangqiu, Henan Province) and later made Lin'



Jin and Southern Song Dynasties (1208)

an (the present Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province) his capital. This period is known as the Southern Song Dynasty. Zhao Gou became Emperor Gaozong of the Song Dynasty.

When the Jin army arrived at the Yellow River valley, people rose up in arms in resistance. They organized themselves into armies and dealt heavy blows to the Jin forces. The Jin army was unable to hold its ground on the central plains for a long time, and its march south was delayed. When the Jin troops crossed the Yangtze River in 1129, the generals of the Southern Song Dynasty fought back with determination and persistence. Han Shizhong held the Jin army at bay at Huangtiandang for as long as forty-eight days. Yue Fei recaptured Jiankang from the Jin forces. In 1140, the Jin force undertook another attack against the Southern Song Dynasty, which negotiated for peace. In 1142, the Southern Song Dynasty and the Jin Dynasty signed a peace agreement, which stated that the Southern Song Dynasty would submit itself as a vassal to the Jin Dynasty; the two parties delineated a boundary extending from the Huai River in the east to the Dasan Pass in the west, with the area north of the line becoming Jin territory; the Southern Song Dynasty would send an annual tribute of 250,000 *liang* of silver and 250,000 bolts of silk. The title of Emperor Gaozong's reign was Shaoxing and the treaty is historically known as the "Shaoxing Peace Agreement." Later, however, the Jin Dynasty and the Southern Song Dynasty would once again be in conflict.

### **The Economic Growth of the Southern Song Dynasty and the Economic Recovery in the North**

Though its territory was reduced to barely more than half of that of the Northern Song Dynasty, the Southern Song Dynasty was content to retain the south of the Yangtze River, which covered the economically most developed Jiangsu, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei and Guangdong region. With the southward migration of the northern population and the promotion of economic growth by the Southern Song government, the natural resources of the south were soon developed and the economy grew rapidly.

In agriculture, within the territory of the Southern Song Dynasty, the water conservation and irrigation systems were already well developed. To increase financial income, the Southern Song government rewarded regional officials for repairing the water conservation and irrigation

projects. In the first fifty years of the Southern Song Dynasty, the significant water conservation projects built or repaired in its territory included the Guitang Dyke in Tanzhou, Hunan Province, Shanhe Dam in Xingyuan Prefecture, and the seventy-two sources of the Lianhu Lake in Zhengjiang Prefecture, which were capable of irrigating ten thousand *qing* (1 *qing* equals to 66,670 square meters), over 9,300 *qing* and over ten thousand *qing* of farmland respectively. In addition, the old lakes in Huiji and Shanyin in Shaoxing Prefecture and in various counties in Zhuji Prefecture were all repaired. As the irrigation systems were repaired and developed, the number of paddy fields increased and yields were further raised. In areas like Suzhou and Huzhou around Taihu Lake, rice yields were so abundant that this proverb became very popular: "When the rice in Suzhou and Huzhou is ripe, it is enough for the people in the whole country to consume." Cotton was more widely grown, covering areas from Guangdong and Fujian to the valleys of the Yangtze River and the Huai River. Tea cultivating areas also outnumbered those of the Northern Song Dynasty. Sugarcane was grown in large quantities in some areas in Fujian, Zhejiang, Sichuan and Guangdong.

In handicraft industries, cotton weaving gradually became the major side occupation in the villages of the cotton growing areas. At that time, a set of cotton-weaving tools to roll, fluff, spin and weave were in use. A cotton blanket from Southern Song Dynasty, unearthed in Zhejiang Province, was closely woven, thick but soft, with a very high level of craftsmanship. The shipbuilding industry also experienced a marked progress in technology. Ships built at this time were equipped with compasses and were capable of sailing against strong winds. In fact, merchants from other countries preferred to use ships of the Southern Song Dynasty.

In commerce, overseas trade flourished. Among the major sea ports were Quanzhou, Guangzhou and Mingzhou (the present Ningbo in Zhejiang Province). Near Quanzhou can be found the remains of ports and docks, sites of Islamic temples, Arabian tomb stones and monuments which recorded exchanges between China and foreign countries. At that time, China traded with Japan and Korea to the east and some African countries to the west.

As the economy grew in the south, the Jin Dynasty also took measures in the north to revive agricultural production. For instance, in the reign of Emperor Shizong, the government recruited peasants to open up the original

course of the Yellow River for cultivation. When some areas experienced famine, the court would reduce or exempt rents and taxes. Through such measures, the northern economy began to revive and develop.

## Yuan Dynasty

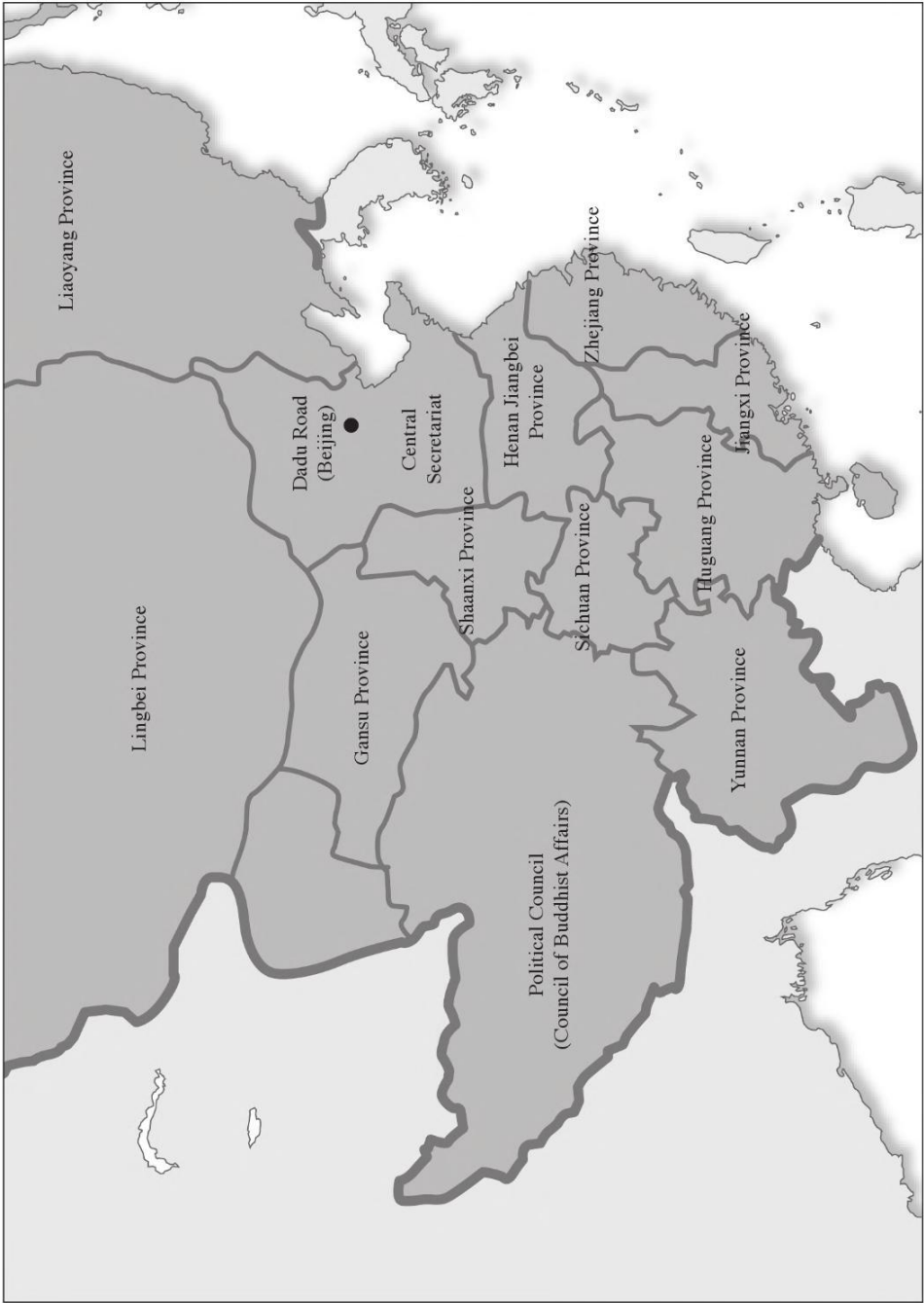
### **The Rise of the Mongols and the Expansion by the Mongol Khanate**

The confrontation between Song and Jin lasted for about half a century before the Mongols rose in the northern Mongol plateau. The Mongols were an old ethnic group in the north of China, who originally roamed to the east of the Ergun River before spreading over the vast Mongol plateau. In the twelfth century, the Mongols began to develop their contacts with border ethnic groups. The Mongol tribes were frequently bitter rivals over wealth. During these tribal wars, along the Onon River slowly rose above the others a Mongol tribe, whose outstanding chieftain, Temujin, built up a powerful army. After fighting that lasted more than ten years, he defeated the surrounding tribes and unified Mongolia. In 1206, the Mongol aristocrats assembled near the sources of the Onon River and proclaimed Temujin as their Khan, Genghis Khan (Universal Ruler) of the Mongol regime.

After the Mongol regime came into being, Genghis Khan and his successors started large-scale wars of expansion and conquered and crushed many regimes within China's territory. The Western Xia, Tubo and Uygurs submitted themselves to the Mongols. In 1227, the Mongol incorporated Western Xia. In 1234, the Mongols, in collaboration with Southern Song, crushed Jin.

### **The Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty and the Collapse of the Southern Song Dynasty**

After Jin was overthrown, the Southern Song Dynasty acted to regain the areas south of the Yellow River. It dispatched troops from the west of the Huai River to seize the city of Kaifeng, where some of their forces were sent on to Luoyang. Unfortunately, soon after the Song army occupied Luoyang, the Mongol army marched in to capture the city. In the end, the Song army was defeated and had to withdraw from Luoyang. The forces left in Kaifeng also had to abandon the city because their food



Territory of the Yuan Dynasty (1330)

supply was insufficient and the Mongol army breached the dykes of the Yellow River to flood the city. Thereafter, the Mongol forces launched a full-scale attack against the Southern Song army in Sichuan, Xiangnan and Jinghuang, along the Yangtze and Huai Rivers. In 1260, Kubla inherited the Mongol title of Khan. In 1271, he officially established Yuan as the name of the country. In the following year, he made Dadu (the present Beijing) his capital. Kubla became Emperor Shizu of the Yuan Dynasty. In 1276, the Yuan army conquered Lin'an, capital city of the Southern Song Dynasty, and took the emperor prisoner.

The armed forces and the people of the Southern Song Dynasty, under the leadership of Wen Tianxiang, continued to fight against the Yuan troops. Even after he was captured, Wen Tianxiang remained faithful, leaving the well-known lines of poetry "Since olden days, which man has lived and not died? I'll leave a loyalist name in history!" In 1279, surrounded by the Yuan army, the Prime Minister Lu Xiufu, carrying Zhao Bing, the little young emperor-in-exile of the Southern Song Dynasty on his back, jumped into the sea from Yashan Mountain. Both drowned and the Southern Song Dynasty came to an end.

### **The Territory of the Yuan Dynasty and Its Foreign Relations**

The Yuan Dynasty occupied a territory vaster than any previous dynasties. When the Yuan Dynasty was established, the Mongol Khanate, covering the Euro-Asian continent founded in the time of Genghis Khan, had gradually split into the Kipchak Khanate (Golden Horde), the Chagatai Khanate, the Il Khanate and others, though the emperor of the Yuan Dynasty was still, in name, the Khan of the other Khanates and they still maintained some contact with each other.

The Yuan Empire in the thirteenth century was the most powerful and most wealthy country in the world, with its influence extending to Europe, Asia and Africa. A steady flow of Western envoys, merchants, travelers and missionaries made their way to China. In the reign of Emperor Shizu of the Yuan Dynasty, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, who traveled to all the big cities in China, served as an official in China. In his *Travels of Marco Polo*, he gave a vivid and detailed description of Yuan's vast territory and prosperous commerce, which inspired European interest in Chinese civilization. Thanks to the frequent contacts between China and the West, the Chinese compass, gunpowder and printing were introduced, via Arabia, to Western Europe, while Arabian astronomy,



medicine and mathematics were also gradually introduced into China.

### The Ethnic Assimilation and Oppression Policy

The unification of the Yuan Dynasty promoted the assimilation of the various ethnic groups. Many Han people migrated to the frontier, which contributed to the opening up of the border areas. The frontier ethnic groups, including the Mongols, immigrated in large groups to the Central Plains and the south of the Yangtze River and settled among the Han people. The Khitans and the Nuzhens, who had moved into the Yellow River valley and cohabited with the Han people, had lived there for so many years that both groups were now known collectively as the Han. From the Tang Dynasty onward, many Persians and Arabians who believed in Islam also settled down in some areas in China, and more arrived during the Yuan Dynasty. They lived among and intermarried with the Han people, the Mongols and the Uygurs. The slow assimilation resulted in a new ethnic group—the Huis.



Stone engravings in Mogao Caves of Dunhuang showing six kinds of Chinese characters (Yuan Dynasty)

As a regime set up by the Mongols, the Yuan Dynasty tried every means to consolidate the Mongols' ruling position while adopting a divide-and-rule policy towards the other ethnic groups. The Yuan Dynasty divided the people in the country into four classes—in the top class were the Mongols, from various Mongol tribes; next were the Semus (People with Colored-eyes), the people from Western Xia, the Huis, the Western Regions and a group of Europeans living in China; third were the Han, referring to the Han people originally under the rule of the Khitans, the Nuzhens and Jin; in the

lowest class were the Southerners, subjects of the Southern Song Dynasty and people in southwest China. The four classes held different political and legal status. In the political and military systems, the Yuan Dynasty also implemented a policy of ethnic hierarchy and oppression.

### **The Provincial System and the Administration of Tibet and Taiwan**

The Yuan Dynasty administered the country through the institution of provinces. The Central Secretariat was set up, in the central government, as the highest executive institution of the country, in charge of Dadu as well as its adjoining areas, called Fuli (the hinterland). Field Secretariats were also set up in other areas as Provinces, governed by officials appointed by the central government. Except for Fuli, the whole country was divided into ten provinces, including remote areas like Yunnan. The establishment of Lingbei Province, in charge of the areas north of the Gobi desert, was particularly significant to the centralization of power and the consolidation of the unified, multinational China. The provincial system had such a far-reaching effect on the later generations that the highest regional administrative area today is still called a province.

The Yuan Dynasty commissioned officials, stationed military forces, surveyed registered households and levied taxation in Tibet. Meanwhile, the Political Council (Council of Buddhist Affairs) was set up in the central government and was mainly responsible for administrating the political affairs of Tibet. Kubla conferred on Phagsba, the Lama leader in Tibet, the title of Imperial Tutor, thus Lamaism became the national religion of the Yuan Dynasty. All this proved that Tibet became an official district of the Yuan Dynasty. The Yuan Dynasty also established the Penghu Inspecting Office, which demonstrates that Yuan already exercised sovereignty over the Penghu and Liuqiu Islands, including Taiwan.

### **The Society and Economy of the Yuan Dynasty**

The Yuan Dynasty witnessed an important new development in society and the economy. The fact that cotton was planted over a vast area created favorable conditions for the growth of the cotton textile industry, which boomed in the area of Songjiang (Shanghai), where the widely known “the Wunijin Quilt” was produced. A local peasant woman, Huang Daopo, who had learned advanced cotton weaving technology

from the Li ethnic group, introduced it in her home town and also improved cotton weaving tools, which contributed to the development of the cotton textile industry.

As Dadu of the Yuan Dynasty was quite populous, it mainly relied on the south for its food supply. To solve the transportation problem, in the reign of Emperor Shizu, the Yuan Dynasty had the Huitong canal from Dongping to Linqing, Shandong Province, opened up. Later, the Tonghui canal from Tongzhou to Dadu was built and linked with the original Grand Canal so that the state ships transporting grain to Dadu straight from Hangzhou. The Yuan Dynasty also opened new sea routes. Grain ships could set out from Liujiang port at the mouth of the Yangtze River, cross the Yellow Sea and the Bohai Sea, and arrive at Zhigu (Tianjing), where the grain would be transported again to Dadu. The sea route became an important line of grain transportation.

Commerce flourished in some big cities during the Yuan Dynasty. Dadu was not only the political center of the Yuan Dynasty, but also a well-known cosmopolitan commercial city throughout the world. Huge quantities of commodities were shipped into Dadu by sea, by canal and overland. Caravans and envoys from Asia, Eastern Europe and the coast of Africa streamed into the empire. Quanzhou was the biggest port of overseas trade in the Yuan Dynasty, where hundreds of sea vessels often moored and enormous quantities of goods were gathered and shipped. The Liusheng Tower, still standing near Quanzhou today, was the lighthouse that guided ships in and out of the port.

### **The Uprisings of the Red Turbans and the Overthrow of the Yuan Dynasty**

From the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, various ethnic groups continued to resist the government and its policy of ethnic oppression. In the north, as the Mongols maintained a stabilized rule, the Han people carried out anti-Yuan activities in secret. In the south, the anti-Yuan uprisings came one after another. The main forces of the uprisings first gathered in Fujian, and later spread to other provinces. The leaders of the uprisings were mostly the remaining troops of Zhang Shijie, an anti-Yuan general, and appealed to the common people to help restore the Southern Song Dynasty.

Towards the end of the Yuan Dynasty, political corruption, economic breakdown, the breaching of the Yellow River and years of

natural calamities gave rise to uprisings which swept across China. In 1351, the peasants, led by Liu Futong, rose up at Yingzhou (the present Fuyang, Anhui Province), where the rebel soldiers wore red turbans, and were known as the “Red Turbans.” The peasants responded enthusiastically everywhere—Xu Shouhui rose in rebellion in Jingshui (the present Xishui County, Hubei Province), and Guo Zixing rose in rebellion in Haozhou (the present Fengyang County, Anhui province). As Liu Futong’s army grew, he launched a northern expedition over a variety of routes, conquered Shangdu (east of the present Right Blue Banner, Inner Mongolia) and closed in on Dadu. However, the lack of a unified leadership and the dispersion of the forces led to the failure of the expedition. Zhu Yuanzhang, who was born in a tenant family, joined Guo Zixing’s Red Turbans, from which he emerged as a leader. His influence continued to grow as he gradually brought the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River valley under his control. In 1367, Zhu Yuanzhang issued his anti-Yuan proclamation to the people and sent his army north to take the Central Plains. In the following year, Dadu was conquered, and so ended more than ninety years of rule by the Yuan Dynasty.

## The Ming Dynasty

### **The Establishment of the Ming Dynasty and the Reinforcement of the Autocratic Monarchy**

In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed himself emperor in Yingtian (present day Nanjing, Jiangsu Province), and established the Ming Dynasty. Zhu Yuanzhang became Emperor Taizu of the Ming Dynasty. After its establishment, Emperor Taizu spent nearly twenty years removing the warlords before the country was finally unified.

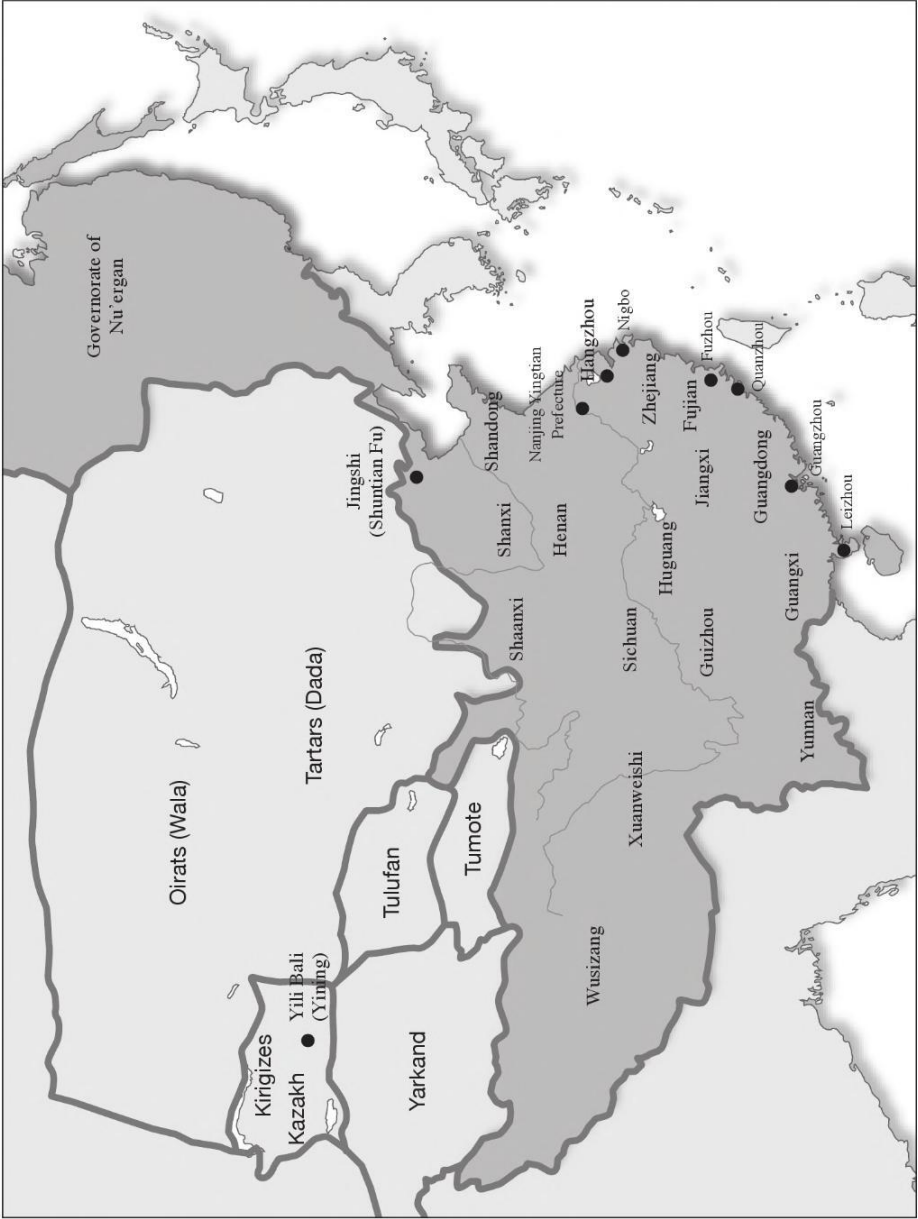
The Ming Dynasty adopted a series of measures to reinforce the autocratic monarchy. First, the Central Secretariat and Chancellor were abolished to reinforce the power of the monarch. After the power of the officials was weakened, Emperor Taizu abolished the post of Chancellor and appointed Six Ministries to be responsible for their respective court affairs. They were headed by ministers directly responsible to the emperor. Second, a surveillance section, the Chambers and Brocade Guards, was set up to intensify the court’s supervision of officials and the suppression of people. Emperor Taizu authorized the Brocade Guards

to take charge of investigations, arrests and trials. The Brocade Guards were under the direct command of the emperor, instead of the Board of Justice. Later, the Ming Dynasty set up institutions like the Eastern Chamber, which spied on and were in charge of the eunuchs. They, too, were under the direct control of the emperor. Third, the “eight-legged essay” was used to recruit officials. The Ming Dynasty had retained the civil service examination system to recruit officials. According to the government, the subject matter of the examinations was confined to the “Four Books” and “Five Classics;” the examinees could only develop their essays according to the assigned notes, instead of their own interpretation; and the style of the paper had to conform to the set eight-legged essay, which restricted freedom of thought. Fourth, the regional administration was conducted by three offices. Emperor Taizu repealed the field secretariats, installed the Administrative Commissioner’s Office, the Judicial Commissioner’s Office and the Military Commissioner’s Office. The Administrative Commissioner’s Office was responsible for civil affairs; the Judicial Commissioner’s Office was in charge of penalty, imprisonment and supervision; and the Military Commissioner’s Office was responsible for military affairs. The three offices were of equal status and subject directly to the court, which enhanced the central control over the country.

### **Transferring the Capital to Beijing and Constructing the Great Wall**

After the Ming Dynasty was founded, the Mongols retreated beyond the Great Wall. However, they were still a force to be reckoned with. They sent their troops southward many times to raid the border areas of the Ming Dynasty. Soon after Emperor Chengzu ascended the throne, he decided to transfer the capital to Beijing so as to strengthen the military defense. In 1417, the Ming government undertook the task of building Beijing. Three years later, the project was over. In 1421, the Ming government transferred its capital to Beijing.

To consolidate the defense of the northern border, the Ming government, beginning with the early Ming Dynasty, spent nearly two hundred years building the Great Wall. The Wall extended from the Yalu River in the east to the Jiayu Pass in the west, zigzagging six thousand kilometers, spectacular and awe-inspiring. It was one of the greatest projects in the world.



Territory of the Ming Dynasty (1582)

### **New Economic Developments in the Mid-Ming Dynasty**

Since the rehabilitation policy carried out at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the economy had gained new impetus. By the mid-Ming Dynasty, agricultural production exceeded previous levels. Rice was more widely cultivated—double harvest rice was developed to the south of the Yangtze River and triple harvest rice south of the Qingling Mountain. Maize, tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco originally grown in America were introduced into China in the late Ming Dynasty and were widely grown in some areas. The plantation areas of the traditional cash crops like mulberry, hemp and cotton were also enlarged, and cotton cultivation spread to the south and the north of the Yangtze River. Cotton became popular material for people's clothes.

The handicraft industries thrived. As cotton was now widely available, the cotton weaving industry developed quickly. Songjiang was still the center of the cotton industry, where cotton production was extensive and of excellent quality. The silk weaving industry continued to flourish, especially in Suzhou and Hangzhou. For the porcelain industry, Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province was the most famous center, where nearly one thousand kilns operated. With large-scale kilns and a sophisticated division of labor, its output was sold throughout the country. The iron-smelting industry used charcoal as fuel, which improved the quality of the smelted iron. Iron-smelting centers included Zunhua in Hebei Province. In the mining industry, gunpowder was used to blow open the mines.

With the development of agriculture and handicraft industries, the economy boomed. Up to two hundred different types of product were marketed in large quantities. Over thirty big cities in the country became famous as either centers of the handicraft industry and commerce, or as ports for overseas trade. By the late Ming Dynasty, the regional and trade division of commodities further widened, land buying and selling increased, and silver coins were widely circulated.

### **Invasion of the Mongols and their Cultivation of Cordial Relations with the Ming Dynasty**

In the fourteenth century, the Mongols split mainly into the Tartars (Dada) and Oirats (Wala). Later, the Oirats rose in power and defeated the Tartars. In 1449, the chieftain of the Oirats marched south with a great army and fought against the Ming army at Tumubao. The

Ming army was defeated and Emperor Yingzong was captured. As the Oirats closed in on Beijing, the military force and the people of Beijing prepared to resist. In the end, the Oirats withdrew. Later the power of the Oirats declined, while the Tartars prospered. The Tartar Anda Khan was reconciled with the Ming Dynasty. The Ming government opened a market in the border area, where the two sides exchanged goods they needed. Anda Khan built Huhehot, which soon grew into a city of commerce, where the Mongols traded with the inland people.

### **Qi Jiguang's Resistance against the Japanese Pirates**

In the mid-Ming Dynasty, Japanese pirates began to harass shipping along China's southeast coast. Japanese samurai, merchants and pirates colluded with Chinese smugglers and pirates to pillage the coast and divide the spoils. They threatened the lives and livelihoods of people along the coast, who eventually took up arms to fight the pirates. The Ming government also dispatched forces to the coastal areas to wipe out the Japanese pirates. Qi Jiguang and his private army, the Qi army, played a big part in expelling the Japanese pirates. In 1561, the Qi army won nine victories in nine battles along Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, rapidly clearing out the Japanese pirates there. Later, Qi Jiguang led his army into Fujian and Guangdong, where he cooperated with another general, Yu Dayou, to inflict heavy losses on the Japanese pirates. In the meantime, the Ming government relaxed its ban on sea trade. By 1565, the Japanese pirates were by and large eliminated along the southeast coast of China.

### **The Arrival of Western Colonizers and Missionaries in the Orient**

In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese and the Spanish sailed to the east from Europe. In 1511, the Portuguese appeared off the southeast coast of China and behaved aggressively. In 1557, they pillaged the residency in Macao, in Guangdong. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch reached the east. In 1603, Dutch colonizers invaded the China's Penghu Islands but were defeated by the military forces and the people in Fujian. They turned instead to Taiwan, which they occupied in 1624, later building the city of Chiqian.

As the colonizers were busy plundering the southeast coast of China, European missionaries also arrived. In 1580, a group of Jesuits arrived in Macao. They were followed by more missionaries, such as Matteo



Ricci (1552–1610), Diego de Pantoja (1571–1618), Niccolo Longobardi (1559–1654) and Sabbatino de Ursis (1575–1620). Matteo Ricci reached Beijing in 1601 and received permission from Emperor Shenzong of the Ming Dynasty to build a church there. While preaching religion, these missionaries also introduced the Chinese to the tenets of Western philosophy and discoveries in the natural sciences.

### **Intensification of Social and Political Conflicts in the Mid- and Late-Ming Dynasty**

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ming Dynasty was plunged into deep social and political conflict. The Ming royal families annexed such a large amount of land that the estates established by the princes, dukes, ministers, nobles and eunuchs surpassed those of any previous dynasties. In the process of annexation, they robbed people of their property, burned their houses, leveled off or filled in family tombs, cut down trees and forced many people to flee their hometowns. They levied heavy taxes on their tenants, and even personally abused them. The aristocrats and the great families also recklessly annexed land, reducing many peasants to tenants, who had to rent land from the landowners and pay very heavy rents.

Meanwhile, government levies and taxation also reached new high levels. The “never-to-be-taxed” land was completely taxed. The Ming government also converted the majority of the land taxes of the provinces south of the Yangtze River into silver, which became known as “rent silver.”

Large numbers of refugees appeared as more land was annexed and taxation increased. Except for a small number who moved to the cities, or went abroad to make their living, the majority of the refugees was reduced to becoming hired hands, tenants, slaves and servants of the landowners. A few went into the mountains and managed to sustain themselves by reclamation or mining. However, the Ming government stopped that by either levying taxation, forbidding access to the mountains, or by sending armies to suppress the refugees. Unsurprisingly, large-scale peasant uprisings began in the mountains where Zhejiang Province, Fujian Province and Jiangxi Province had a common boundary, and in the Yunyang mountains where Henan Province, Shaanxi Province, Sichuan Province and Huguang Province were contiguous.

### **The Single-Whip Taxation System**

The intensification of social and political conflict, together with the peasant uprisings, impelled the Ming government to introduce some appropriate political reforms.

In the beginning of Jiaping Period, during the reign of Emperor Shizong, the Ming government enacted successive measures, such as reducing the rent silver, reforming the taxes and corvée, restraining the eunuchs and surveying the estates of the royal families and the nobles. However, by the mid-Jiaping Period, the internal struggles within the ruling class intensified, political corruption increased, and bureaucratic embezzlement prevailed. The reforms vanished like soap bubbles. The wars of resistance against the Oirats in the north and the defense against the Japanese pirates in the south resulted in a huge increase in military spending. The Ming government faced a political crisis.

In the early Wanli Period, during the reign of Emperor Shenzong, Zhang Juzheng, Chief Councilor of the Inner Chancery, initiated a series of reforms, the most important of which was financial reform. In order to increase the revenue, the government began to survey the land on a large scale, check how much land people owned, and amalgamate the original land taxes, corvée and a variety of other taxes into one, which was then converted into silver before it was apportioned according to the amount of land. This was the so-called “Single-Whip Taxation System,” which was eventually applied country-wide.

### **The Rise of the Manchus and the Establishment of the Qing Dynasty**

In the mid-Wanli Period, the Ming Dynasty once more faced a serious political crisis. The land annexation spread again; military activities, such as assisting Korea in fighting the Japanese invaders, drained the national treasury; heavy taxation and corvée once again overwhelmed the peasants; and within the court factional struggles increased in ferocity. Worse still, the rise of the Manchus in the northeast presented a serious threat to the Ming Dynasty.

The Manchus originated from the Nüzhen in the northeast. In the early Ming Dynasty, one branch of the Nüzhen migrated to the east of Liaoning Province beyond the Great Wall, exchanging their horses, sable, ginseng and pearls for iron tools, grain, salt and silk products with the Han people. In the late Ming Dynasty, an outstanding chieftain of

the Jianzhou Nüzhen, Nurhachi, gradually unified the Nüzhen tribes and established the “Eight Banner System”—the Nüzhens were organized under eight banners, with members hunting or farming during times of peace, or going into battle as militia during wars. In 1616, Nurhachi ascended the throne of Khan, established a regime, and made Hetuala (west of the present Xinbin, Liaoning Province) the capital. The regime was named Jin, known historically as Later Jin. From 1618 on, Nurhachi led the army of Later Jin in constant attacks on the Ming army stationed in the east of Liaoning Province. He seized a large piece of land east of the Liao River, and moved the capital to Shengyang. After Nurhachi died, his son Huang Taiji succeeded the throne and changed the name Nüzhen to Manchu. In 1636, Huang Taiji enthroned himself as emperor, adopting Qing as the title of his reign.

After the Qing Dynasty was founded, they continued to fight the Ming Dynasty in the east of Liaoning Province. In addition, they broke through the pass from the Great Wall several times and raided the provinces of Shanxi and Shandong, capturing a large group of people, livestock and property. In 1642, the Ming Dynasty lost control of several military forts in the east of Liaoning Province, following a Qing attack. The east of Liaoning was on the verge of a complete breakdown.

### **The Uprisings of the Dashing King and the Demise of the Ming Dynasty**

Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, the north of Shaanxi suffered years of plagues. The local authorities still pressed the peasants to pay taxes and levies as usual. The peasants were driven beyond endurance and rose up in a series of rebellions. The peasant uprisings gained headway as several peasant armies, led by Gao Yingxiang and others, emerged. Gao Yingxiang assumed the title Dashing King. After he died, the army named Li Zicheng the new Dashing King. The main force of the army of the uprising was divided into two branches, one led by Li Zicheng, the other by Zhang Xianzhong. In 1640, Li Zicheng led the army into Henan, where the army, in view of land concentration and heavy taxation situation, adopted the slogan “Equalization of Landownership and Freedom from Taxation,” which won them the support of the peasants and caused tremendous social upheaval. In 1641, Li Zicheng conquered Luoyang, and put to death the greedy and ruthless Zhu Changxun, Prince of Fu. In 1643, Li Zicheng sacked Xi’an. Early

the next year, Li Zicheng founded a peasant regime, entitled Dashun. The Ming Dynasty was caught between the horns of domestic unrest and foreign invasion.

Soon after the regime of Dashun was set up, Li Zicheng led his peasant army towards Beijing, which he occupied in 1644. Emperor Chongzhen of the Ming Dynasty hanged himself in Coal Hill (the present Jing Hill, Beijing). The Ming Dynasty was overthrown.

## The Qing Dynasty

### **The Entrance of the Manchus into the Shanhaiguan Pass and their Domination over the Country**

When Li Zicheng seized Beijing, the Qing army outside the Shanhaiguan Pass marched south. The Ming general stationed in the Pass, Wu Sangui, surrendered to the Qing Dynasty. Li Zicheng led his army on an eastern expedition, and engaged in a fierce battle in the Shanhaiguan Pass with Wu Sangui's army and Qing's army. The peasant army lost the battle and Li Zicheng had to withdraw to Beijing before retreating to Shaanxi.

Shortly after the Qing army entered the Shanhaiguan Pass, the Qing Dynasty transferred its capital to Beijing. The Qing army continued to pursue and attack the peasant army. In 1645, Li Zicheng led the peasant army far and wide, until they finally arrived at Jiugong Mountain, Hebei Province, where he was attacked by the local armed forces and killed. Another peasant army, under the leadership of Zhang Xianzhong, had a long fight in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River before they finally conquered Chengdu and established the regime of Daxi. Later, the Qing army captured Sichuan and killed Zhang Xianzhong. Even after Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong were killed, the remnants of the peasant army kept on fighting for nearly twenty years.

At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the bureaucratic system of the Ming Dynasty was retained, and the Inner Chancery and the Six Ministries in the central government were established. Later, Emperor Yongzheng organized the Council of State, which was made up of trusted followers and under the direct command of the emperor. The Council of State became the imperial confidential secretariat, and military affairs were brought under the complete arbitration of the emperor, further reinforcing the authority of the emperor. The basic regional systems of

the Ming Dynasty were also maintained in the Qing Dynasty, though the Military Commissioner's Office was replaced by Governors-General and Governors, who were responsible for military affairs. The Governors-General and Governors were also directly in charge of the Administrative Commissioner's Office and the Judicial Commissioner's Office. As a result, central domination over the local areas was strengthened.

To try to control the minds of the people and suppress any anti-Qing sentiments, the Qing Dynasty ruthlessly enforced literary inquisitions and ran a cultural dictatorship. A case in point was "The Collection of Nanshan," a relatively large case at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. The literary inquisitions prevailed in the reign of Emperors Kangxi, Yongzhen and Qianlong. In the reign of Emperor Kangxi, the biggest literary inquisition was the case of "The History of Ming" and the case of "The Collection of Nanshan." Zhuang Tingrui in Zhejiang Province bought the manuscript of *The History of Ming*, written by Zhu Guozhen at the end of the Ming Dynasty, and enlarged it before passing it off as his own work. In the book were found some lines condemning the Qing Dynasty, so he reported to the Qing government. Zhuang Tingrui's coffin was opened and his body was desecrated. His brother Tingyue was executed, and of the more than two hundred people also implicated, over seventy were killed and the rest were exiled. The Hanlin Academy edited and revised *The Collection of Nanshan* by Dai Mingshi, which recounted anti-Qing incidents at the end of the Ming Dynasty, as well as at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. Emperor Kangxi made his displeasure clear. Dai Mingshi was killed on government orders and hundreds of people were implicated.

### **The Economic Recovery and Growth in the Qing Dynasty**

At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, pursuing and attacking the peasant armies and clearing out anti-Qing forces sabotaged production in many areas. The Qing rulers gradually changed their policies and adopted measures to encourage the clearing and cultivation of wasteland. Regional officials were rewarded or punished according to their achievements in supervising waste land cultivation. In 1669, Emperor Kangxi again declared that the land of the original princes of the Ming Dynasty belonged to the present cultivators. Emperor Yongzheng implemented the system known as "Apportioning the Poll Tax into Land," that is, amalgamating poll and land tax, so that only one tax

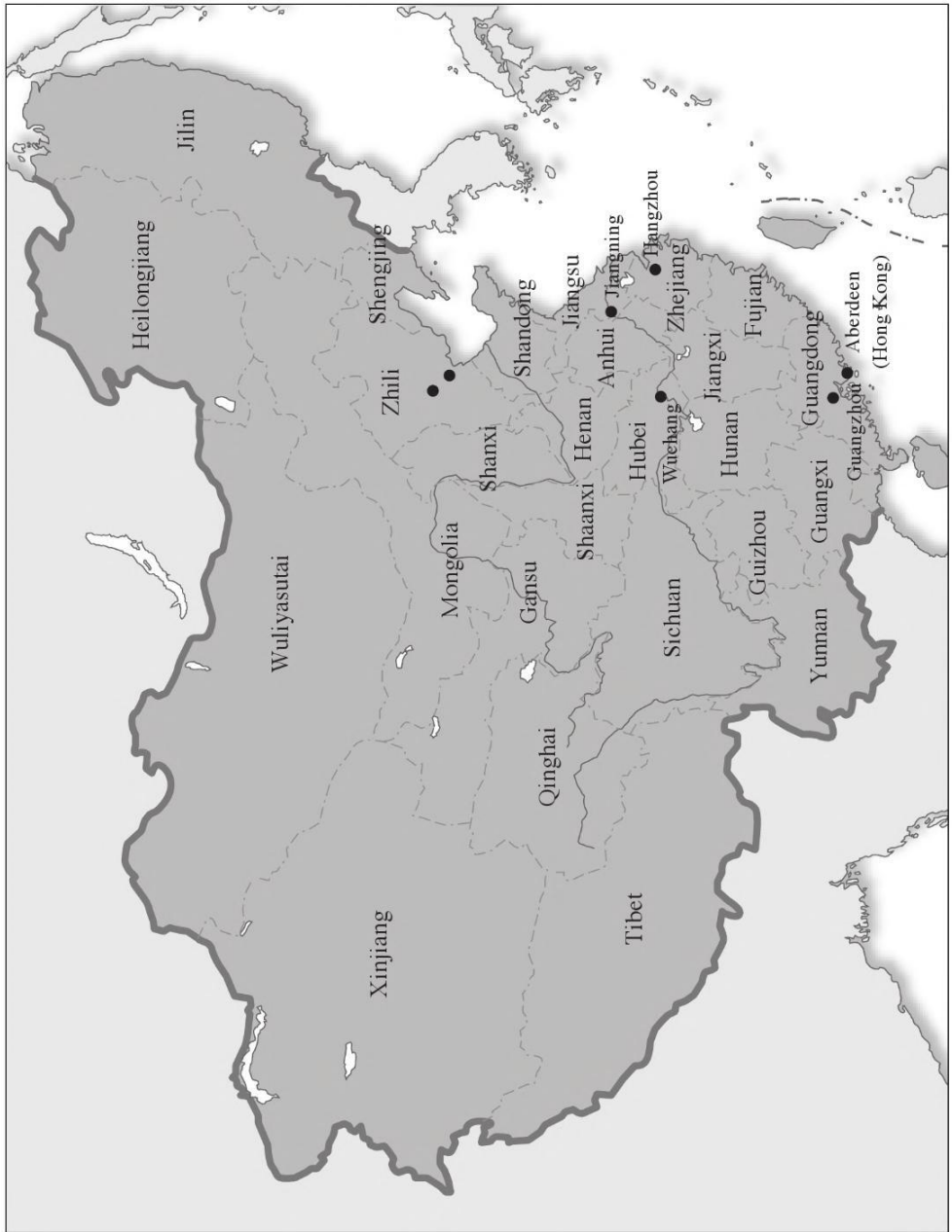
would be levied. This was “the land and poll tax in silver.” The poll tax long levied in China was abolished, thus relaxing the control over the peasants.

From the mid-reign of Emperor Kangxi, agricultural production gradually recovered and prospered. The peasants cultivated vast wasteland across China. In the first hundred years of the Qing Dynasty, the cultivated areas increased by more than forty percent. The handicraft industry in the early Qing Dynasty was even more developed than that in the Ming Dynasty. In the silk-weaving industry, Suzhou alone had more than ten thousand looms and it was overtaken later by Nanjing and Guangzhou. As for the porcelain-making industry, the production in Jingdezhen reached unprecedented levels. In the mining and metallurgy industries, the copper mine in Yunnan employed more than ten thousand miners, while the iron-melting furnaces in Guangdong could produce iron sheets up to more than six thousand *jin* (catty) per furnace per day.

### The Consolidation of the Country

The first years of the Qing Dynasty were an important stage in the evolution of a unified China. At the end of the Ming Dynasty and at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the Mongols split into three groups—the Southern Mongols, the Northern Mongols and the Western Mongols. Before the Qing entered the Shanhaiguan Pass, the Southern Mongols had already pledged allegiance to the Qing Dynasty. Later, the other two groups followed suit.

At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the Western Mogul Junggars, who roamed along the Ili River valley, gradually rose to power. Under the rule of Galdan, the influence of the Junggars extended to south of the Tianshan Mountains. Galdan's ambition was such that he even assumed the title of Khan. In 1690, with the support of Tsarist Russia, Galdan, using the pursuit and attack of the Northern Mongols as an excuse, openly marched into Mongolia. Emperor Kangxi personally led his troops to meet the invaders. The Qing forces defeated Galdan's army in Ulanbutung (the present Chifeng, Inner Mongolia). Later, Galdan prepared for another big invasion. In 1696, Emperor Kangxi personally led the expedition again. The Qing army beat Galdan in Jao Modo (south of the present Ulanbatuo, Inner Mongolia). In the end, the Qing Dynasty brought the Northern Mongols under control, in addition to dominating the south and north of the Tianshan Mountains. The Turgots of the



Territory of the Qing Dynasty (1820)

Western Mongols migrated to the lower reaches of the Volga River at the end of the Ming Dynasty and at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, but eventually were controlled and oppressed by Tsarist Russia. In 1771, under the leadership of their chieftain Wobaxi, they broke through the encircling Tsarist army and traveled a distance of five thousand kilometers to return to their native land, where they were warmly welcomed by Emperor Qianlong.

In the early Qing Dynasty, the people who lived to the south of the Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang were mainly Uyghurs, who believed in Islam and were called the Huis. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Uygur Big and Small Hojos staged a rebellion, which was put down by an army sent by Emperor Qianlong. Large numbers of Big and Small Hojos were killed after their defeat and the Qing government reunified the Xinjiang area.

The Qing Dynasty also reinforced its administration over Tibet. At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Shunzhi received Dalai Lama VI, the Lama leader in Tibet, and officially conferred on him the title of Dalai Lama. Later, Emperor Kangxi conferred on another Lama leader, Bainqen VI, the title of Bainqen Erdini. The Qing government ruled that the titles Dalai and Bainqen in later generations had to be conferred by the central government. In 1727, the Qing government appointed a High Resident Commissioner, with the Dalai and Bainqen, to administer affairs in Tibet on behalf of the central government. China's unification was further consolidated.

### **The Territory of the Qing Dynasty**

In the early Qing Dynasty, the territory of China reached from the Chongling Mountains in the west to the northern bank of Balkhash Lake in the northwest, adjoined Siberia in the north, extended to the Outer-Khingan Mountains and the Kurile Islands in the northeast, faced the Pacific in the east, stretched to Taiwan and its adjacent islands, such as the Diaoyudao Islands and Chiweiyu Islands, and covered the Southern Sea Islands in the south, thus becoming the biggest country in East Asia.

In the Qing territory, there lived more than fifty ethnic groups, including the Han people, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Huis, the Tibetans, the Uyghurs, the Miaos, the Yis, the Zhuangs, the Bouyeis, the Koreans, the Yaos, the Kazaks, the Lis, the Gaoshans, the Jingpos, the Daur and the Lhobas. These ethnic groups, with their different cultures and customs, contributed significantly to the evolution of Chinese civilization.



*Han Feizi* that the Confucian School split into eight branches; while the Mohist School split into three; and the Taoist School is no exception. There are thirty-seven Taoist works, altogether 993 articles, contained in *The Roll of Art and Letters of History of the Han Dynasty* compiled by Ban Gu in the Eastern Han Dynasty, most of which were written in the pre-Qin Period. By classifying the articles, we can identify such branches of the Taoist School as the Laozi branch, the Zhuangzi branch, the Huang-Lao Tradition, the Yang Zhu branch and the Liezi branch. In fact, this classification was made by later generations rather than by people at the time. Different branches laid special emphasis on different aspects, such as ruling over the states and cultivating one's moral character; since they all belonged to the Taoist School, they naturally had something in common, which contained the general features of the Taoist School. The main features are such ideas as taking *tao* as the origin of all creation and force, non-action, an intense affirmation of life and rejection of external concerns, for which different branches had different understandings and interpretations.

### ***Tao as the Origin of All Creation and Force***

The reason the Taoist School acquired its name is that it takes *tao* as the core of its thought. Although other schools also talk about *tao*, they all attach special importance to human affairs, namely, the "way of the human." The *tao* of the Taoist School is unique in that it evolved from the way of heaven but differs from it. Generally speaking, the way of heaven refers to the orbits and rules of the movements of the celestial bodies, such as the sun, the moon and stars, while *tao* is the origin of all creation and force in the universe. This idea, with Laozi's exposition, was adhered to by all the branches of this school and eventually became one of the essential principles of Taoism, although different branches differed somewhat in their interpretation of this principle. It was because of the Taoist School's reflections on the origin of creation that the concept of metaphysics was introduced to Chinese philosophical scholars.

### **Following Nature and Taking Non-Action**

The concept of *tao* was put forward to solve the problems of society, politics and life; thus with specific elaborations, all the branches of the Taoist School insist that non-action should be one of the major characteristics of *tao*. In terms of the different problems concerned, non-

action can be considered both as a way of ruling over the state and as an attitude toward life. As a way of ruling a state, non-action requires that the ruler should disregard his own will and desire but let the people follow their own paths. With this as a prerequisite, different branches of the Taoist School had various interpretations of the concept of non-action. As an attitude toward life, non-action has the same implications as the “wandering” of Zhuangzi, referring to a free and unconstrained life.

### **Affirmation of Life and Rejection of External Concerns**

All the branches of the Taoist School valued life above external concerns, especially above high official positions and wealth. From Laozi onward, Taoist scholars stressed the importance of life over fame and wealth and advised the rulers to value and cherish life. Later, all the branches respectively developed the idea of the affirmation of life and the rejection of external concerns. The Yang Zhu branch pushed the idea to the extreme by advocating that “I would not try to benefit the world if I have to pluck off one hair for that,” while the Zhuangzi branch gave priority to the pursuit of spiritual freedom.

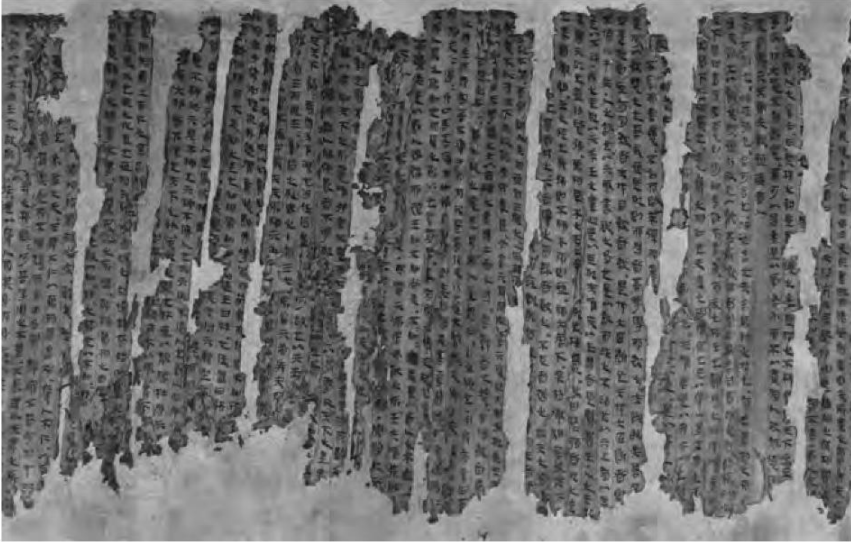
In terms of their doctrines, the Taoist scholars were all committed to self-cultivation and state-ruling. Although all the Taoist branches sought the harmony and unity of these two aspects, each emphasized one particular aspect; generally speaking, the Huang–Lao Tradition paid more attention to state-ruling, whereas the Zhuangzi branch tended to focus on self-cultivation and the pursuit of spiritual freedom.



### **The Life Story of Laozi**

There are different views in academic circles concerning the life story of Laozi and when the book *Laozi* was written; the following introduction is based on the accounts in *The Records of the Historian*.

Laozi (?604 BC–?531 BC), a contemporary of Confucius, is the founder of Taoism. He was born in Li Town, Ku County (in the present Henan Province) and was given the name Li Er, although people preferred to call him Lao Dan in the Warring States Period. Later, he went to Luoyang, the capital of the Zhou Dynasty, to be an official historian. There he



*Laozi*, written on silk  
(Han Dynasty)

met Confucius, who consulted him on his knowledge of rituals. Laozi, therefore, could be considered one of the teachers of Confucius. Laozi served as an official historian for many years but eventually resigned because of his disappointment in the decline of the Zhou Dynasty. It is said that before he set off westward out of the Tongguan Pass, he wrote the five-thousand-word book *Laozi* at the request of Guan Yin. The book was called *The Classic of Tao and Virtue* (*Dao De Jing*) by later generations. Originally, the book was not divided into different sections and scholars did not determine the arrangement of the sections until the Han Dynasty. Later, it was common practice to divide the book into eighty-one sections and that is the *Laozi* we read today.

The life of Laozi could roughly be divided into the periods of life as an official historian and life as a hermit. As an official historian, he accrued an extensive knowledge of nature, society and life because his job was closely related to the laws of Heaven, rules of etiquette and the study of history. His wide knowledge led him to become a consultant to the king and the aristocrats, and this led to his involvement in politics. His experience of a hermit-style life helped him break away from the bounds of his profession and gave him the intellectual ability to reflect freely on social reality. Thus, the profound thoughts reflected in *The Classic of Tao and Virtue* could be attributed to his extensive knowledge,