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# 这就是中国 头一个五千年

# This Is China

## *The First 5,000 Years*

EDITED BY **HAIWANG YUAN** 袁海旺 WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

**Ronald G. Knapp,** *State University of New York, New Paltz,* **Margot E. Landman,** *National Committee on United States–China Relations,* **Gregory Veeck,** *Western Michigan University*

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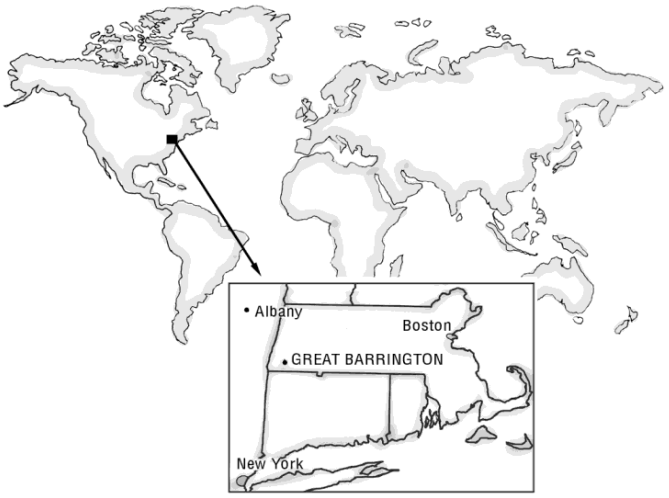


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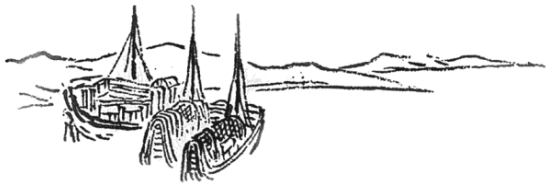

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# Introduction

**During President Barack Obama's first visit to China in November 2009, he addressed a group of Shanghai students and proclaimed that no big issues in the world today could be resolved without cooperation between the United States and China. His trip coincided with the debut of *2012*, a disaster film in which world leaders band together in the midst of impending calamity. The movie, which makes China the manufacturer of the gigantic arks that salvage the last of the humanity from global cataclysm, served as a fitting footnote to the president's speech.**

Major changes have been taking place in China since it opened to the world and began epoch-making economic reforms in the late 1970s. The president's speech and the movie both envisage, in different ways, what might lie ahead, and what role China might need to play in our common future.

Indeed, China is poised to be the world's second largest economy, with its gross domestic product (GDP) having increased to 4.91 trillion U.S. dollars in 2009 from 53 billion U.S. dollars in 1978. As 2010 begins, China is the world's largest Internet user and has the world's largest mobile phone network. It has built a total of 50,000 kilometers (31,250 miles) of superhighway (second only to the United States) since 1988, when it had none at all. It boasts the world's first commercial maglev system (magnetic levitation system, used to guide and propel vehicles) and the fastest high-speed train system with trains that run from 200 to 350 kilometers (124 to 218 miles) per hour.

At the same time, China continues to face enormous challenges: a huge population in a developing country with limited natural resources; an uneven regional development; a gap between rich and poor as great as anywhere in the world (a disparity that could lead to social and political unrest); disputes over territory; and ethnic and religious tensions. Many people debate whether a nation with a one-party government system can effectively address such domestic issues (never mind international ones).

On one side are those who believe that a two-or-more-party system is essential to success and stability in the twenty-first century. Others, in China and the West, argue that China's system, though in need of reform, is actually the most effective way to manage a huge territory and meet the needs of a huge population. Can China fix what needs fixing within its current system/structure and become a constructive force to help build a better future for the world? *This Is China* does not attempt to provide that answer, but instead gives the big picture in a short space, providing background you can use to judge China-related events as they develop.

Understanding China depends on knowing China better. There's long been an idea in the West that China and the Chinese are inscrutable—that is, hard to understand. Significant differences can make communication a problem, but we are all human, and we face the same challenges and have the same basic needs. China has its own rich history and long-established values and customs, and when Westerners get confused it's usually because they unwittingly make assumptions and judgments based on their own cultures. Karen Christensen, the publisher of *This Is China*, says that when she and her family first began traveling in China, and would comment on an aspect of Chinese life or government policy that seemed puzzling or surprising, they repeatedly heard the phrase, "Well, this is China," and "But this is China." That became the inspiration for the title of our book.

By choosing the subtitle, *The First 5,000 Years*, we intended to be amusing, to make you wonder about the "next 5,000 years." Such telescoping vision comes naturally to fans of science fiction who love to imagine the future, although perhaps not as it plays out in *2012*. *This Is China* focuses on the distant and more recent past, but it is intended to equip students, teachers, and professionals to face the challenges of the present and the great questions that lie ahead. We realize that some scholars think "five thousand years" exaggerates the length of Chinese civilization. Please read the book to see where the different measures come from—and what different people mean by civilization, too.

*This Is China* includes four major sections. Chapter 1 provides background about China's physical and human geographies. Chapter 2 offers an overview of China from prehistory to the end of the last dynasty in 1911/12. Chapter 3 introduces a century of change since 1912. Finally, chapter 4 deals with cultural concepts and ideas that have shaped the way Chinese in the twenty-first century interact with themselves and others. Just as importantly, it addresses concerns and challenges the Chinese and their leaders face today.

With information on every aspect of China selected from the five-volume *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* and other sources, and checked by experts inside and outside China, *This Is China* makes every effort to provide authentic, accurate, and timely

information about China's history—as much as that is possible when dealing with a complex, continuous culture over millennia—and to do so without a political agenda. Nonetheless, we encourage you to approach the book, as you do any other, with critical thinking and an open mind.

This concise 120-page volume is designed to be read straight through, as a short, eye-opening course in contemporary and historic China, or to be dipped into for facts and intriguing sidebars, as well as maps and illustrations. It can be used in curriculum development and as an adjunct to courses—in social studies, international relations, international business, world history, political science, or Chinese language. (We include Chinese characters, as well as pinyin transliterations, since many young people and adults are learning Chinese and because communication—becoming familiar and comfortable with different forms of expressing ideas and information—is the foundation of human culture.)

To supplement and enhance classroom use of the book, we will make two Web-based resources available free of charge: a questionnaire and a selection of Chinese proverbs related to the book's specific contents. We'll also provide links to the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* and other online sites that address the following topics:

- Migration and urbanization
- Foreign relations—and not just with the United States
- Religion
- Regional conflicts
- Ethnicity
- Political development
- Women's rights and roles in China
- Press freedom and censorship
- And much, much more

Finally, we provide a list of sources (including books, articles, and movies) and organizations we consider most valuable—and balanced—and urge readers to send us their own discoveries as they continue to learn about China.

Many people have been involved in making this book possible. Besides the contributors to the articles we have selected, I'm particularly grateful to Karen and Rachel Christensen, along with their Berkshire Publishing team, for helping me assemble this material. Berkshire's senior editor, Mary Bagg, has not only edited the text, but she has excerpted and harmonized the work of a highly varied group of contributing authors, and added many grace notes, too.

It does take a special effort—and the right teachers—to reach a point of understanding and familiarity with China. As a Chinese saying goes: "A master only leads

one into the gate of a temple; it's up to that individual to learn to be a real monk (师父领进门, 修行靠个人 Shīfu lǐng jìn mén,xiūxíng kào gèrén)." If this book can show its readers to China's door and arouse their interest in learning more about the country—the land and the people—then it will serve its purpose.

I sincerely hope that *This Is China* will make a contribution to the understanding of Chinese history, culture, and current events. Facing common global challenges, we need a sense of common purpose based on understanding and respect, so we can share this planet—our ark—and live harmoniously together.

Haiwang Yuan
*Western Kentucky University Libraries*

## About the Editor

Haiwang Yuan, now a U.S. citizen, came from China in 1988 as a Fulbright student and graduated from Indiana University at Bloomington with degrees in history and library science.

Yuan served as an associate editor of the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* (2009); he was a contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (Routledge, 2004) and *Theories and Practices of American Libraries in the Twenty-First Century* (Beijing Library Press, 2007). He is the author of *Princess Peacock: Tales from the Other Peoples of China* (Libraries Unlimited, 2008), *The Magic Lotus Lantern and Other Tales from the Han Chinese* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006), and co-author of *Celebrate Chinese New Year, Holidays around the World Series* (National Geographic, 2009).

Yuan has been a professor at Western Kentucky University in the Department of Library Public Services since 1997. He is now Special Assistant to the Dean of Libraries, and serves on the board of the Chinese American Librarians Association.

# This Is China

## *The First 5,000 Years*

# Chapter 1: Background–The Land and the People

Bèijǐng zhīshi
背景知识

**China's high profile in world history corresponds to its size and huge population, but also (and especially) to the longevity and distinctiveness of Chinese civilization. Ancient China introduced the world to a written language system that is still in use, and to paper, printing, gunpowder, and the compass (the "Four Great Inventions"). The Chinese term "Zhōngguó" 中国, which in English we translate as "China," literally means "Middle Kingdom." The name referred in ancient times to the middle reaches of the Huang (Yellow) River valley. As early as the fifth century BCE, according to *Yǔgòng* 禹贡 (*Tribute of Yu*), a chapter in the Confucian classic *Shàngshū* 尚书 (*Esteemed Documents*), the Chinese subdivided their territory into regions of different geographic and economic features. Gradually the name "Zhongguo" evolved to encompass all the lands under the direct rule of its dynasties. China's imperial borders would expand, contract, and expand again over the centuries—throughout periods of disunity, war, and reunification—to absorb territory occupied by diverse peoples. As the result of the last Chinese Civil War (1945–1949), two political entities emerged that had earlier been considered "one China": the People's Republic of China (PRC), commonly known as "mainland China," and the Republic of China (ROC), which comprises Taiwan and its surrounding islands.**

Chapter 1 introduces mainland China's distinctive physical and human geographies, and the ways in which they were inextricably linked. Varied topography—for the most part rugged and harsh in the vast expanse of the west, and temperate and fertile in much of the east—impacted the movement and settlement of China's population over millennia. The size of that population today, historically and still heavily concentrated in the east, is one of the country's most well-known and publicized aspects: the People's Republic of China, home to about 1,330,000,000 people in 2009, is by far the most populous country on Earth. The decimal shorthand for that number, 1.33 billion, tends to downplay its magnitude, since the "point 33" behind the "1" (330

million people) exceeds by almost 22 million the U.S. population in 2009. (Simply put, there are a billion more people living in China than in the United States.) The impact of such a huge population is one of China's overriding concerns today: as a sustainable development strategist with the Chinese Academy of Sciences explains, any trifling problem in China can be enormous if multiplied by 1.33 billion, whereas any achievement, however brilliant, will pale if divided by the same figure.

## Physical Geography

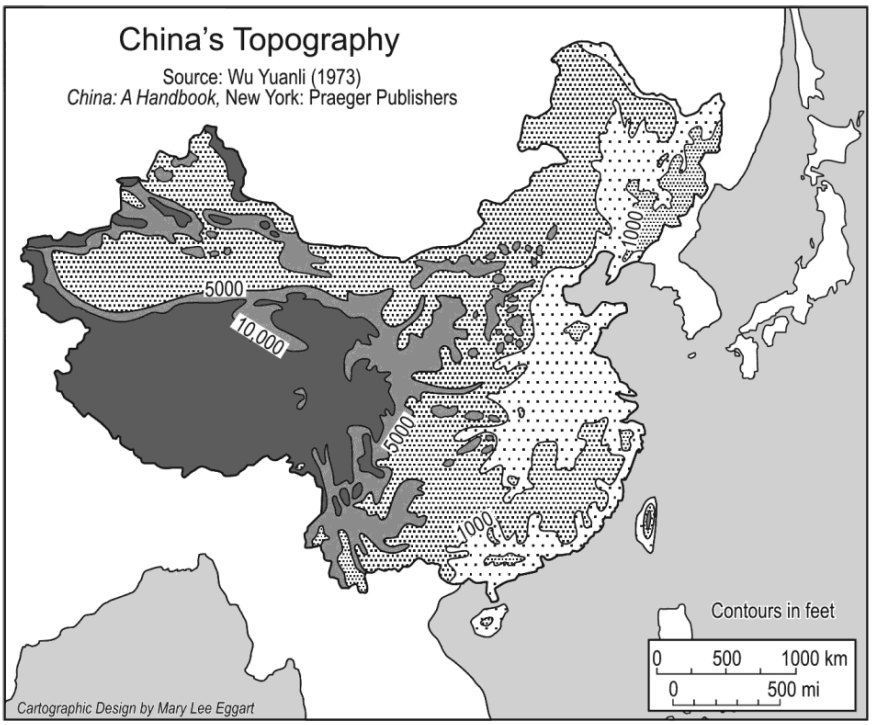
(Zìrán dìlǐ 自然地理)

**The People's Republic of China is one of the largest countries in the world (after Russia and Canada), covering nearly 9.6 million square kilometers, or roughly 3.07 million square miles. Although China is approximately the same size as the United States, a comparison of the two countries' "measurements" depends on several factors: whether PRC claims on territories also claimed by India are valid; where a number of China's ill-defined boundaries are drawn; and how the total size of the United States is calculated. (For China's exact "dimensions" see "Mapping Out China: Some Numbers and Statistics," in the supplementary information to this volume available at www.berkshirepublishing.com.)**

China and the United States share similarities other than size: Both are located in the middle latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. Both have extensive coastlines fronting on middle latitude oceans and seas, although China, unlike the United States, is directly

### Thought Experiment

Throughout history the "extreme geography" of western China kept this vast territory isolated from the more hospitable climate and terrain of eastern China. As you read about China's land, its resources, its population—and its history—discuss how this "downside" became an advantage to China, both domestically and internationally.




***Source*: Gregory Veeck, Clifton W. Pannell, Christopher J. Smith, & Yougin Huang. (2007). *China's Geography: Globalization and the Dynamics of Political, Economic, and Social Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.**

accessible by water only from the east and south. The climate, topography, and soils of southeastern China and the southeastern United States are very much alike. In some ways, the stereotypical notion of the "Wild West" in the early United States as unsettled and remote can be applied to the "frontier" of western China. If China had time zones, there would be four of them, the same as in the continental United States. The Chinese government, however, thinking that one time zone unifies people spread across an enormous territory, has decided that the entire country should run on Beijing time.

## Varied Terrain (Dìxíng duōbiàn 地形多变)

China's territory includes a variety of complex landscapes. In the east, along the shores of the Huang (Yellow) Sea and the East China Sea, lie extensive and densely populated alluvial plains, while grasslands occupy the edges of the Inner Mongolian Plateau in the north. To the west, major mountain ranges, including the Himalayas, and high plateaus stand out from the more arid landscapes of the Taklimakan and Gobi deserts. In the

**Topics for Further Study**

Climate and Vegetation
Grasslands
Huang (Yellow) River
Mount Wudang

south, the land is dominated by hill country and low mountain ranges. The Chinese coastline is about 18,400 kilometers (about 11,443 miles) along the Bohai Bay, Beibu Bay, East China Sea, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea.

Gregory Veeck, co-author of *China's Geography: Globalization and the Dynamics of Political, Economic, and Social Change*, explains how the rugged terrain of China's western regions, which for three millennia have remained sparsely populated, isolated China from neighboring nations and cultures. (Even in the twenty-first century formidable topography and great distances thwart westward connections with the remainder of Asia.) That spatial isolation, coupled with an inhospitable climate, has given western China a distinct developmental and cultural history when compared with the rest of the country. Throughout the centuries, writes Veeck, China focused on overcoming the challenge of its internal physical geography. That is, China's imperial governments spent considerable time and energy melding its various cultures and regions rather than concentrating on external expansion. Despite easy access to the sea and a huge and powerful naval fleet at its command during the early fifteenth century, China's experience was much different than that of small nations such as England and the Netherlands, whose maritime colonial expansion made them, in their heyday, among the most powerful in the world.

## Rivers and Lakes (Héliú yǔ húbó 河流与湖泊)

China has more than 1,500 rivers, each with a drainage basin of at least 1,000 square kilometers (about 386 square miles). (A river's drainage basin, also called a catchment area, is the extent of land on which rainwater or snowmelt flows downhill and is thus "funneled" into the river.) The water flowing along these rivers—more than 2,700 billion cubic meters (95,350 billion cubic feet)—equals 5.8 percent of the world's total. The longest Chinese river is the Yángzǐ 扬子江 (Cháng 长江) in central China, the third longest in the world after the Nile in northeast Africa and the Amazon in South America; its catchment area is about one-fifth the size of China itself. The river, which over centuries cut deep gorges in the countryside, has been prominent in the development of Chinese trade and culture. It is now a vital source of hydroelectric power. Although the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangzi opened in October 2008, building the dam sparked controversy over construction costs, the loss of historic and prehistoric artifacts, the potential environmental impacts of the project, and the displacement of as many as 4 million people.

The Huáng 黄河, China's second largest river, was named for the yellow silt in its waters. Westerners have come to call the Huang "China's sorrow" for the devastation caused by flooding in its surrounding flatlands and farms, but people in China

refer to the Huang as "Mother River." Other principal rivers include the Hēilóngjiāng in the northeast, the Pearl in the southeast, and the Láncāng and Yarlung Zangbo the southwest.

China's natural lakes number around 3,000; about 130 cover an area of more than 1,000 square kilometers (about 386 square miles). But due to problems caused by population growth and economic development, China's total lake area has shrunk by about 16,500 square kilometers (about 6,370 square miles) since 1950; an average of twenty lakes vanish each year. Lake Pōyáng, the largest freshwater lake, is home to half a million migratory birds in winter, notably the endangered white crane, although all its wildlife inhabitants are threatened by environmental degradation caused by sand dredging from the Poyang, a mainstay of the local economy. China's largest inland body of saltwater is Qinghai Lake, located 3,205 meters (10,515 feet) above sea level on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Qinghai Lake is fed by twenty-three rivers and streams, and is home to the Niǎodǎo (Bird Island) sanctuary. To deal with the fact that the lake shrunk by more than 380 square kilometers (about 147 square miles) between 1959 and 2006, a government plan enabled the moving of hotels, restaurants, and other tourist facilities to an area at least 3 kilometers (a little less than two miles) from its banks.

## Climate (Qìhòu 气候)

China's climate is as varied as its landscape, ranging from tropical on the island of Hainan in the south to subarctic in Mòhé County in the northeast. From October to March, winds blow from a strong high-pressure system overlaying Siberia and the Mongolia Plateau into China, decreasing in force as they move southward. These conditions cause dry and cold winters in much of the country and a temperature difference of 40°C (72°F) between the north and the south. In the winter, the temperature in China is 5° to 18°C (9 to 32.4°F) lower than that in other countries on the same latitude. In summer, monsoon winds blow into China from the ocean, bringing with them warm and humid air masses and rains. The city of Kūnmíng, located on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, is unique in that it experiences the warmth of spring year round.

Annual precipitation also varies greatly from region to region: as high as 1,500 millimeters (59 inches) along the southeastern coast and as low as 50 millimeters (less than 2 inches) in the northwest, particularly the Tarim Basin.

## Vegetation, Cultivation, and Mineral Resources (Kěnzhí yǔ kuàngcáng 垦殖与矿藏)

China's great range of natural vegetation, which includes most types native to the Northern Hemisphere, except of course for varieties found in arctic regions, can be categorized (roughly) by geographic area. Along the southern coast of the country and

in Hainan Island, tropical rain forests and other plants indigenous to the tropics thrive, while in the subtropical south and central area broad-leaved evergreens, pines, and many varieties of bamboo are found. In the high mountains of western China and Tibet, alpine and subalpine plant communities abound. At lower western elevations the country holds vegetation common to desert, steppe, savanna, and prairie meadow.

Forestland covers 133.7 million hectares (about 329 million acres) of China's terrain. Most old-growth (coniferous evergreen and deciduous) forests are in the northeast, where Changbai Mountain, designated as an International Biosphere Protection Zone by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), boasts a wide variety of flora. International support and funding for forest biopreserves in Heilongjiang Province has played a critical role in the protection of these northeastern forests, where major species including conifers (Korean pine, larch, and Olga bay larch) and broadleaves (white birch, oak, willow, elm and northeast China ash) are found. Forests in the northeast were first extensively exploited for commerce beginning in 1949, but since the late 1990s commercial timber operations have gradually shifted to the southern portions of the country, where longer growing seasons

**The Dujiangyan Irrigation System in Sichuan, built in 256 BCE, is still in use and intact after the earthquake of May 2008.** PHOTO BY RUTH MOSTERN.

double or triple annual production. Trees in the southwest include dragon spruce, fir and Yunnan pine, as well as precious teak, red sandalwood, and camphor trees.

In the eastern part of the country, densely settled for thousands of years, identifying native vegetation can be somewhat difficult for several reasons. For several millennia China's farmers cut and burned trees, shrubs, and grasses in order to clear fields. Thus new species from other parts of China and Asia have been introduced extensively for slope stabilization and forestry, as well as for cultivation. Likewise, because fuel for cooking and heat has been long scarce, especially in northern China, local peasants devastated forests and grasslands in the search for fuel and construction materials. While increasingly stringent logging bans since the late 1990s may protect the forests for posterity, such conservation measures have made unemployment in the north reach levels as high as those in other rural areas of China. Extensive areas of old growth forests also exist in Tibet, western Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces. Most of these areas could be characterized as poor and remote. This isolation, while a major impediment to improving the living standards and economies of such places, Gregory Veeck explains in *China's Geography*, has also protected these forests to an extent not possible in more accessible areas.

For much of its long history, China has been a nation of farmers; agriculture dates from about 10,000 years ago and perhaps even longer. In southeastern and southwestern China, below the Qinling Mountain range that serves as a natural barrier between the drier north and the wetter south, drainage canals permitted early Chinese farmers to irrigate their new fields, and thus to raise rice. Rice grew naturally in shallow water alongside lakes and riverbanks of Southeast Asia, where local gardeners began to harvest it as early as 8000 BCE. Artificial dikes and canals, like those the Chinese built in the Huang River valley, enormously extended the area of suitably shallow water. The Dujiangyan irrigation system in southern China's Sichuan Province (built in the third century BCE along the Min River, one of the longest headwaters of the Yangzi), still functions to regulate the flow of water and to prevent flooding along the fertile Chengdu Plain.

China's great environmental diversity, Veeck points out, allows for a wide variety of agricultural production; it also offers some protection against damage from local or regional natural catastrophes. The summer floods on many of China's rivers in 1998 were the worst in almost fifty years, for instance, but the national summer grain crop was one of the largest on record as conventionally dry interior grain areas recorded unusually high yields. Protected in this way by its sheer size, Veeck writes, China is still able to meet upwards of 95 percent of its citizens' food requirements while producing an ever-expanding variety of different commodities—grains, fruits, vegetables, commercial/industrial crops, and livestock—for export as well as domestic consumption. Indeed, throughout China's long history the importance of providing the nation's people with food has been linked with the political stability of the state.

China's cultivated land comprises about 94.97 million hectares (about 234 million acres), mainly in the Northeast Plain, the North China Plain, the Middle-Lower Yangzi Plain, the Pearl River Delta Plain, and the Sichuan Basin. Because China has a large population, the area of cultivated land per capita is less than 0.08 hectare, or only one-third of the world's average. In the Northeast Plain fertile black soil is ideal for growing wheat, corn, sorghum, soybeans, flax and sugar beets. Wheat, corn, millet, sorghum and cotton thrive in the deep, brown topsoil of the North China Plain, while the many lakes and rivers of the Middle-Lower Yangzi Plain make that area particularly suitable for paddy rice.

Contrary to China's low world ranking in cultivated land per capita, it ranks first in reserves of such rare metal and earth as germanium, tungsten, scandium, ytterbium, and lanthanum. (China is the third-richest country in minerals at large, having about 153 minerals confirmed as of 2000.) Such bountiful supplies illustrate how China's vast mountains and plateaus can be seen as both a blessing and a curse: they have restricted economic development, transportation, and national integration, but the mineral resources they hold are vital for China's continued economic development. China's rich supply of natural resources includes energy sources like coal, petroleum, natural gas, and oil shale. China's coal reserves total 1,007.1 billion tons, mainly distributed in Shānxī Province and Inner Mongolia.

**Terraced rice paddies lead to Shan Qiao village in the Hengduan Mountains, Yunnan.**
PHOTO BY JOAN LEBOLD COHEN.

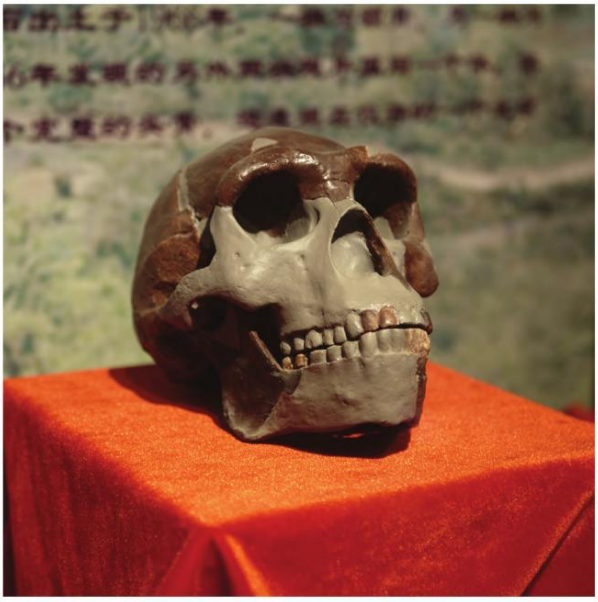
# Human Geography

(Rénwén dìlǐ 人文地理)

Archaeological evidence of human-made tools found in the Rénzìdòng Cave 人字洞 in Ānhuī Province suggests that the earliest humans in China date to about 2.24 million years ago. Three foraging era (Paleolithic) cultures—lower, middle, and upper—that correspond in general to the evolution of humans, from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* to *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern humans), have been discovered at archaeological sites in twenty-seven provinces and autonomous regions of China. Based on paleomagnetic dating of two human incisors, the "Yuánmóu Man" 元谋人 is thought to have lived in Yunnan approximately 1.7 million years ago, although some scholars have reexamined the evidence and now estimate the teeth to be 600,000 to 500,000 years old. Human fossils of "Peking Man," who lived in Zhōukǒudiàn 周口店 to the southwest of modern Běijīng, as well as other remains from that cave site, date from 550,000 to 300,000 to years ago and suggest that the *Homo erecti* population living there made and used simple tools, and most likely knew how to make fire. In the middle foraging era in China (roughly 128,000 to 35,000 years ago), human populations increased, living not only in caves but in camps above ground and near water. The natural environment changed drastically, and depending on the locale—whether the cool and dry north, the temperate grasslands, or the tropical and subtropical forests areas—people engaged in some combination of

## Thought Experiment

China's autonomous regions, all of which are located in underdeveloped western and southwestern China, are contested spaces where local ethnic-minority traditions and growing intrusions by the Han Chinese majority have yet to reach a balance. Demands placed on the environment have now shifted dramatically in response to China's changing economy and society. What problems do these regional differences create for China?



**Fossil remains from cave sites of Peking Man—his skull is replicated here—suggest that the *Homo erecti* population in China made simple tools.** PHOTO BY YAN LI.

**hunting and food gathering. They began to make small, well-polished tools as well as refined objects for ornamental purposes. During the upper foraging era in China, which ended about 10,000 years ago, humans evolved to become modern humans, the glacial period peaked, the weather patterns gradually warmed to become what they are today, and tools and objects, whether in stone or in combination with animal horn, bone, or shell, became even more sophisticated and specialized.**

Remains discovered at about two thousand excavation sites across China provide evidence of the Yǎngsháo (仰韶) culture, dating from about 5000 to 3000 BCE, one of best-known of the Chinese Neolithic era (8000–5500 BCE), remarkable for its painted red pottery. Yangshao people lived in communities with subterranean and above-ground houses built of wood and earth; they supplemented their millet-based agricultural society by hunting, gathering, and fishing. The Yangshao culture afforded high social status to its women, although men were still the primary holders of economic and political power.

As societies developed the need for governance increased. Historical records, some of which scholars question, as well as archaeological evidence just as controversial, indicate that the Xià 夏 (2100?–1766? BCE) was the first Chinese dynasty. Since then over four hundred monarchs came and went in the following 4,000 years—see chapter 2 for an account of dynasties and imperial governance leading to the birth of modern China in the twentieth century.

## Ethnicities (Mínzú 民族)

Hundreds of ethnic groups have existed in China throughout its history. The largest by far is the Hàn 汉, making up slightly more than 91 percent of the total population as of 2010. Over the last three millennia, many previously distinct ethnic groups in China were assimilated into the Han, dramatically expanding the size of its population over time. These assimilations were usually incomplete, however, and vestiges of indigenous languages and cultures are still visible among the Han in different regions of China. As of 2010 there are fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minority groups (*shǎoshù mínzú* 少数民族) in China, numbering about 110 million people. Taken together, ethnic minority homelands occupy more than half of China, including 90 percent of its border areas, and provide the nation with most of its minerals, forest reserves, animal and meat products, and medicinal herbs. In these homelands, known as "autonomous regions," the indigenous ethnic minorities usually number less than half the total population, however, and in some of these areas (especially the Xīnjiāng Uygur Autonomous Region and the Tibetan Autonomous Region), immigration by Han Chinese is on the rise.

Article 4 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1982) states that all nationalities in the PRC are equal; a 1984 amendment includes a number of provisions to (1) ensure that ethnic minorities have the right to form autonomous organizations and self-governing bodies and to garner support from higher level organizations; (2) that unskilled workers receive training; and (3) that relationships among groups strengthen. Nevertheless, problems remain concerning self-determination and autonomy. The 1978–1979 opening of China's economy to world markets brought prosperity to the nation and fostered a renewal of interest in and respect for ethnic minorities that had disappeared during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), but economic policy focused on the eastern coastal areas of China, not the western areas in which most minorities live. Efforts beginning in the 1990s to correct the imbalance between the thriving east and the poorer west have yet to be satisfactorily effective.

For a list of ethnic minorities and their populations (based on mainland China's latest census in 2000), see table 1 in the supplementary information to this volume available at www.berkshirepublishing.com.

## Faiths and Philosophies (Zōngjiào 宗教)

China's imperial history reflects the global exchange of religious beliefs and philosophical thinking. Before the seventh century CE people adhered to three main tenets: Confucianism—based on the teachings of Confucius, one of China's first and greatest philosophers—encouraged principles of benevolence (*rén* 仁), trust (*xìn* 信), righteousness (*yì* 义), propriety (*lǐ* 礼), and knowledge (*zhì* 智); Daoism, a religion whose followers synthesized the teachings of the philosopher Laozi with disparate beliefs (i.e.,

## Confucius 孔夫子

***Confucius (551–479 BCE) is China's greatest philosopher. For centuries, his teachings have influenced Chinese thinking about a person's ideal education and the proper way to behave.***

Confucius was born in the state of Lu (鲁 in today's Shandong Province) with the family name of Kong (孔) and the given name Qiu (丘), which was stylized as Zhongni (仲尼). He was eventually given the title "Kong the Grand Master" (Kong fuzi 孔夫子), later Latinized as Confucius. He married at nineteen, had two daughters and a son, and held a minor office in Lu. He dedicated his life to teaching, but believed his true calling was to reform the decaying Zhou culture. At the age of fifty-one, Confucius was promoted to magistrate and subsequently to Minister of Justice of Lu. Disillusioned with his ability to change the bureaucracy, Confucius set out five years later with his closest disciples to other states in search of a worthy ruler who would implement his teachings. After almost thirteen years, he returned to Lu to teach. According to traditional Chinese history, he wrote or edited the Five Classics: *Shujing* (书经 *Classic of History*), *Shijing* (诗经 *Classic of Poetry*) *I Ching* (易经 or *Yijing, Classic of Changes*), *Chunqiu* (春秋 *Spring and Autumn Annals*), and *Liji* (礼记 *Classic of Rites*), as well as the now-lost *Classic of Music*.

After his death, Confucius's influence and reputation only grew. By the time of Mencius (371–289 BCE), another famed Chinese philosopher, Confucius was considered a sage. Emperors of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) made offerings at his tomb, which became a shrine and later a temple. During the Song dynasty (960–1279), the scholar Zhu Xi streamlined and compiled details of Confucius's life and teachings in the Four Books: Daxue (大学 Great Learning), Zhongyong (中庸 *Doctrine of the Mean*), *Lunyu* (论语 *Analects of Confucius*), and Mengzi (孟子 *Mencius*), of which the Analects is the most important.

Confucius was an innovative teacher. His school was open to all serious students, and it transformed aristocratic mores into collective moral values. Confucius emphasized literacy (*wén* 文) and demanded that his students be enthusiastic, serious, and self-reflective. He held that all persons, but especially the ruling class, must develop moral integrity by practicing ritual action (*lǐ* 礼) in order to express humanity (*rén* 仁) and to become a consummate person (*jūnzǐ* 君子). One word that defines his teachings is *shù* (恕), meaning "empathy," which is defined in the *Analects* as "never do to another what you do not desire." With a renewed interest in Confucius in China, his teachings continue to influence many aspects of Chinese culture.

yīn–yáng 阴阳 theory and the benefits of traditional Chinese medicine); and Buddhism (a religion based on goals of achieving wisdom and compassion, and on doing no harm to humans or animals), which came to China from India via central Asia. Traditional ancestral religions, which involved rites, prayers, sacrifices, and festivals that celebrate ancestors as well as land and nature, had a huge impact on Chinese society, and eventually on dynastic politics.

In twenty-first-century China people practice—officially, under control of the state—five religions protected by the constitution: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Belief in polytheistic folk religions that venerate ancestors and emphasize the externalization of reputation (*míng* 名)—the practice of which includes worshiping gods and goddesses of good fortune, fertility, longevity, and safety, among others—is widespread throughout the country, but followers of these faiths, and of Christianity and Islam as well, often experience less "freedom" than Buddhists and Daoists.

Although religious practice is a constitutional right for the populace at large, the Chinese Communist Party requires its members to espouse Marxist atheism. China is wary of any unregulated religious or similar groups and gatherings. Since its official position is separation from foreign creed, any unauthorized or "underground" gatherings—of Vatican loyalists for example—are discouraged or even suppressed. The fate of these Roman Catholics in China apparently depends on improved relationship between China and Vatican, the only state in Europe (as of 2010) that recognizes Taipei (in Taiwan) instead of Beijing as China's legitimate government.

## Language (Yǔyán 语言)

Today most languages in China, including those spoken by the Han majority and twenty-eight other ethnicities, belong to the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The Han people primarily speak Mandarin, the language used by 70 percent of China's population. In 1995, Modern Standard Chinese, based on the Beijing dialect of Mandarin called Pǔtōnghuà (the common language 普通话), was designated as China's national language to foster ease of communication. Han speak seven other dialects—Wú (Shanghainese), Yuè (Cantonese), Xiāng, Gàn, Hakka, Southern Mǐn, and Northern Min—but they are mutually unintelligible.

Ethnic minorities speak about 120 different non-Sinitic languages; the most common include Zhuàng (Thai), Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur (Turkic), Hmong, and Korean, not all of which exist in written form. These languages belong to the Altaic, Indo-European, South Asian, and South Island families. Many of them face the danger of extinction because, individually, they are known to fewer than a thousand people.

**Topics for Further Study**

Ethnic Minorities
Historical Geography
Music, Traditional
Religious Practice, Contemporary

Han who work among ethnic minorities are encouraged to learn to speak these languages, and bilingual education programs are becoming increasingly common in China's ethnic autonomous regions. Even so, people must speak Mandarin to advance socially, economically, and politically.

Wényánwén 文言文, or classical Chinese, was the language used as the standard for literature and formal writing in China before the twentieth century, although remnants of the language still survive in the form of idioms, allusions, and expressions. From 650 CE to 1905 social and intellectual life in China had been especially dominated by the rigorous tests known as civil service examinations (*kējǔ* 科举), a system used to recruit officials based on merit rather than on family or political connections. Because legions of men trained and studied to take these exams (women were excluded), but relatively few achieved the extremely high grade needed to become a court official, men from a number of professions and social ranks, from physicians to merchants to landed gentry, comprised China's literati class. The stress on classical language in literature and Confucian-based philosophies gave the Chinese a unified cultural voice in times of invasion by the Mongols (see discussion of the Southern Sòng dynasty [1127–1279] and the Yuán dynasty [1279–1368] in chapter 2). Vernacular Chinese, or *báihuà* 白话, a written standard based on the Mandarin dialect, was first popularized in Míng-dynasty (1368–1644) novels and was later adopted with significant modification as the more colloquial, national vernacular during the Republican era of the early twentieth century. When China's last imperial government (the Qīng, 1644–1911/12) lost control of the educational system in 1904, Chinese intellectuals were ready for this new unifying voice, one that spoke the language of nationalism and reform.

The concept of "chronological geography" as a way to approach Chinese history reached its zenith during the Qing. (Scientific or "modern" geography did not reach China from the West until about 1910.) Over centuries Confucian scholars had developed a systematically arranged geographical order by which to record and preserve imperial ideology; the Qing, clinging to traditional values until the bitter end, reconstructed such historical treatises sponsored by past dynasties, paying special attention to how descriptions of administrative systems, road networks, and water systems changed over time, and to verifying the locations of key historical events and settlements. Chapter 2—which begins with an account of China's mythological origins, moves through its earliest cultures and states, and goes on to cover the entire period of China's imperial empire—continues the story of China's history, its land, and its people.

# Chapter 2: From Prehistory to the End of the Empire

Shǐqián zhì mòdài wángcháo
史前至末代王朝

**According to Chinese mythology, the Earth was created in the midst of chaos. Within that chaos nested a huge primordial egg. In that egg grew a giant named Pán Gǔ 盘古; in some versions of the myth he is said to be a primal deity and the offspring of Yīn 阴 and Yáng 阳, the two vital forces of the universe. After eighteen thousand years Pan Gu broke through the egg's shell (some stories say he used an axe, others describe how the shell just cracked). From the opaque yolk that spilled out, Earth took shape under his feet; the clear "white" of the egg rose to form the sky. Pan Gu continued to grow, always holding the sky above the Earth. After another eighteen thousand years, thinking that Earth and sky were secure in their positions, Pan Gu laid down to rest one night and then died from exhaustion. Parts of his body became elements of the universe; his bones turned into the mountains, his blood flowed and became the rivers, his breath the moisture of the air, and his hair the vegetation. Even the lice on his body, myth tells us, morphed into animal life.**

Chinese myth attributes the creation of human life to Nǚ Wā 女娲, a goddess whose lower body was like a snake's. Living on the Earth after its separation from the heavens, she was lonely; after looking at her reflection in a pool of water she decided to sculpt a tiny copy of herself—which would become the first human—from mud. But the process was slow, and Nǚ Wā was impatient, so she dipped a vine into mud and shook it, thereby splattering the mud and turning the multitude of droplets into a whole population of human beings. To prevent this new species from dying off, she paired them so they could reproduce.

Civilizations, of course, depend on more than procreation to survive. Chinese myth credits Sānhuáng-Wǔdì 三皇五帝 for creating a succession of eight legendary sage-emperors and culture heroes who instructed the ancient Chinese in communicating with one another, finding sustenance, and fabricating clothing and shelter.

| Dates | Dynasty | Pronunciation | People, Places, and Things |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2100?–1766? BCE | Xia Dynasty | "Zeeah" | Real or Legendary? |
| 1766–1045 BCE | Shang Dynasty | "Shahng" | Ancestor Worship and Oracle Bones |
| 1045–256 BCE | Zhou Dynasty | "Joe" | Bronze, Jade, and Confucius |
| 221–206 BCE | Qin Dynasty | "Chin" | Terracotta Soldiers |
| 206 bce–220 CE | Han Dynasty | "Hahn" | Paper, Porcelain, and the Silk Roads |
| 220?–589? CE | Southern and Northern Dynasties | | China's "Dark Ages" |
| 618–907 CE | Tang Dynasty | "Tahng" | Poetry and Literature |
| 907–960 CE | Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms | | Short-Lived Reigns |
| 960–1279 | Song Dynasty | "Soong" (like "woo") | Markets, Paper Money, and the Abacus |
| 1125–1234 | Jurchen Jin Dynasty | "Jurchen Jin" | Cavalry Warfare |
| 1279–1368 | Yuan Dynasty | "Yoo-EN" | Mongol Rule |
| 1368–1644 | Ming Dynasty | "Ming" | Building the Great Wall |
| 1644–1911/12 | Qing Dynasty | "Ching" | Manchu Rule |

Chinese mythology dates back some four thousand years—to just about the same time that the tribal people known as the Xià 夏 were said to first thrive in northern China—but the versions of the myths above took roughly two thousand years to formulate before they were written down. We can imagine how stories about the Xia might have changed as they passed from generation to generation, just like the stories of myth. (Did Pan Gu really have an axe with him in the egg, or did the shell just crack?) Is it surprising, then, that China's earliest dynasty is the subject of much scholarly contention?

### "Dynasties Song"

*Singing "Dynasties Song" to the tune of "Frère Jacques" is a good way to remember the major Chinese dynasties in chronological order.*

Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han
Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han
Sui, Tang, Song
Sui, Tang, Song
Yuan, Ming, Qing, Republic
Yuan, Ming, Qing, Republic
Mao Zedong
Mao Zedong

*Source: Courtesy of the teachers on the College Board AP–World History Listserv legendary or real*

## Xia Dynasty: Real or Legendary?

Xià cháo: shǐqián yǔ chuánshuō
夏朝: 史前与传说
2100?–1766? BCE

**The Xia dynasty, dated by some scholars to approximately 2100 BCE, is the earliest Chinese dynasty to be described in ancient historical records. Those records, however, were first transmitted through oral traditions such as storytelling, song, and drama, and the earliest was not written down for some two thousand years. Although archeologists discovered artifacts in 1928 to support the existence of the Xia, the evidence did not correlate to the historical records. No wonder modern scholars have debated, and still do, whether the Xia dynasty was legendary or real.**

## Xia Dynasty: Debatable Dates

***The Chinese used to refer to the Ming dynasty's*** Yongle Dadian ***as the "greatest event in cultural history." No longer. The Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project (XSZCP) has usurped the 11,095-volume encyclopedia's top position. The XSZCP, winner of the PRC's "Ten Great Scientific Progress Awards," began in 1996 as a taxpayer-funded scholarly collaboration to develop an agreed-upon timeline for one of the most contentious chronologies of China's history.***

Stories of the Xia, handed down from oral tradition, were eventually chronicled in annals such as the first century BCE *Records of the Grand Historian*, an earlier text—*Bamboo Annals* (written on bamboo slips, interred with the Wei king circa 296 BCE, and rediscovered in 281 CE), and a traditional chronology based on calculations by Liu Xin (c. 46 BCE–23 CE), an astronomer and historian. The dates given for the Xia in these histories vary to a considerable degree.

The aptly named "Skeptical School" of early Chinese history, founded in the 1920s, seriously questioned the veracity of these traditional tomes, noting that over time oral histories had been embellished to flesh out missing details. With an increase in archaeological excavation in the 1920s, scientists developed methods of dating to establish chronologies, and thus supplemented textual interpretation, whether the "text" was written on bronze, oracle bones, bamboo, or paper.

Some seventy years later, enter XSZCP, a multidisciplinary effort commissioned by the PRC in 1996; two hundred scholars were asked to propose chronological frameworks for Xia, the early Shang, the late Shang, and the Western Zhou dynasties. The report, published in 2000, determined that the Xia dynasty dated from 2070 to 1600 BCE. The Chinese government officially accepted the report, but it caused considerable controversy when results were announced overseas.

Although the word "exact" appears only once in the project's overview, scholars found plenty to argue about; both Chinese and Western historians let tempers fly. The *New York Times* reported that Stanford University professor David Nivison claimed he would "tear [the report] into pieces." The Chinese media portrayed the international criticizers as "imperialists" and "hostile forces," while some in the West countered that the project was politically motivated and nationalistic.

Since those initial outbursts both sides have participated in three academic conferences and have debated face to face, but the intensity of such encounters is still reported as fierce. A large part of the controversy involves methodology, which can be as different

## Xia Dynasty: Debatable Dates *(Continued)*

as carbon dating or interpreting the astronomical data reported in the *Bamboo Annals*. An article by Professor Nivison's, published in the spring 1995 edition of the journal *Early China News* and presented at a 1997 conference in Boulder, Colorado, reveals some of the complex problems involved in coming to terms with dates. The paper can be accessed on the Internet at the source below.

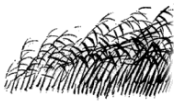
*Source:* David V. Nivision. (1997). The Riddle of the *Bamboo Annals*. Retrieved December 6, 2009, from http://www.stanford.edu/~dnivison/rdl-aos.html

The Xia period links late Neolithic cultures with the urban civilization of the first historically documented dynasty, the Shāng 商 (1766–1045 BCE). The Xia had villages and urban centers, but they were primarily an agrarian people. Their pottery and bronze implements continue to assist historians in developing more definitive chronologies. During the Xia dynasty the major crafts included jade carvings and cast bronze vessels (some of the vessels were embellished with jade). The Xia also devised a calendar system that incorporated lunar and solar movements. Excavations in 1959 at Èrlǐtóu 二里头 (in Yǎnshī 偃师 County, Hénán Province), uncovered what appears to have been a capital of the Xia dynasty, and although no historical record of it exists, archaeological evidence (including radiocarbon dating) demonstrated that the inhabitants were the direct ancestors of the Lóngshān 龙山 culture and predecessors of the Shang.

Traditional Chinese histories contend that the Xia dynasty was founded when a ruler named Shùn 舜 ceded his throne to his minister, Yǔ 禹, because he believed him to be the "perfect civil servant." Yu was esteemed by his people for organizing the construction of canals and dikes along all the major rivers, thus eliminating the devastation of annual flooding. But before his death Yu passed power to his son Qǐ 启 and set the precedent for dynastic rule, or the hereditary system, which put family and clan in political and economic control. Rulers often performed as shamans, communicating with spirits for guidance, and the ruling families employed elaborate and dramatic rituals to confirm their political power.

Fifteen descendants of Qi inherited the throne after his death. Several, such as Shàokāng 少康 and Huái 槐, made important contributions to Chinese society, but

three were tyrannical emperors: Tàikāng 太康, Kǒngjiǎ 孔甲, and Jié 桀. The Xia dynasty ended under the reign of Jie, whose dictatorial and extravagant ways caused a popular revolt under the leadership of Tāng 汤, the leader of the Shang tribe, who overthrew the Xia and established his own dynasty in 1766 BCE.



# Shang Dynasty: Ancestor Worship and Oracle Bones

Shāng cháo: jìzǔ yǔ jiǎgǔwén
商朝: 祭祖与甲骨文
1766–1045 BCE

**In the early twentieth century the Shang dynasty posed the same problem for historians as the Xia: no excavated cities or written records existed from the period to verify later chronicles of its history. Not until the late 1920s, when archaeologists uncovered some bone fragments in northern China near the Shang capital at Ānyáng 安阳 in Henan Province, was the first tangible evidence of the dynasty documented. These fragments, which came from the shoulder blades of oxen and the shells of turtles, were just like the so-called dragon bones that nineteenth-century Chinese pharmacists had been grinding up and selling for medicinal purposes, often as a remedy for malaria—most likely people had been finding them for years in random locations and at far-flung sites. The excavated bones were remarkable, just like the dragon bones, for being inscribed with strange glyphs, the precursors of Chinese characters. But their significance, as oracle bones of the Shang, had never been realized before the discovery at Anyang.**

Chinese during the Shang dynasty used oracle bones (*jiǎgǔwén* 甲骨文), so named because of the markings inscribed on them, to aid in divination. (By the end of the dynasty the practice became the exclusive privilege of royalty.) Someone would write a question on a bone, or ask for a prediction about the future—*would the next military campaign be a success, what were the prospects for the upcoming royal hunt, is the king in good health*—and then the diviner (oracle) would place a burning-hot bronze tool against the

bone until little cracks appeared. The oracle would then interpret the cracks to answer the question. Records from *jiǎgǔwén* dating to the Shang, along with inscriptions etched on bronze vessels (*jīnwén* 金文), cover only the reigns of the last nine kings, from Wǔ Dīng 武丁, said to have held the throne from 1198 to 1189 BCE, up to Dì Xīn 帝辛, who died around 1045 BCE. Many oracle-bone inscriptions date to the early part of the next dynasty, the Zhōu 周 (1045–256 BCE).

**Topics for Further Study**

Anyang

Archaeology and Paleontology

Oracle Bones

Religion, Folk

Nearly twenty-five thousand inscribed pieces were excavated from Anyang between 1928 and 1937; they included more than twenty-two thousand turtle shells and some twenty-two hundred bones. The excavations resumed in 1950; the largest totaled more than five thousand inscribed pieces. About 80 percent of some 4,500 characters used in the oracle-bone inscriptions are recognizable; through their interpretations, scholars themselves have divined much about Shang daily life—the farming methods and techniques for domesticating animals, the treatment of medical conditions, the sophisticated legal system, and the mastery of textile production, for instance.

## Religious Ritual and State Power (Zōngjiào yíshì yǔ guójiā zhèngquán 宗教仪式与国家政权)

The Shang ruled through an essentially feudal system based on clan birthright and perpetuated by the cult worship of royal Shang ancestors. At least by the end of the dynasty the king, in his role as the sole interpreter of the oracle-bone messages, acted as head shaman. The capital city of the empire moved several times, as the king regularly marked and claimed his empire by performing ceremonial acts at sacred mountains located at the four cardinal directions on the boundaries of his realm. His political authority was strengthened in the state worship of the royal ancestral line. The Shang ancestors, in return, were believed to provide a beneficial influence on the state.

At the royal residence in Anyang, enormous tombs have been uncovered that reveal such practices as human and animal sacrifice, the ritual burial of chariots, and the ceremonial use of vessels and oracle bones. In order to have enough materials for these ceremonies, the central court of the Shang had to take control of the region's natural resources. Mining was a particularly important industry, and Chinese metal-casting techniques were the most highly developed in the world at the time. A huge bronze foundry covering an area of over 9,290 square meters (100,000 square feet) has been discovered at the Miáopǔběi 苗圃北 site south of Anyang, revealing some of the most remarkable of Bronze Age material culture.

Another important archeological settlement named Zhèngzhōu 郑州 exists, with artifacts dating from the middle period of the Shang dynasty, directly beneath the modern city of that name in Henan. Evidence shows that agricultural lands were referred to as the "Shang's land," which implies that a large portion of the crops were intended to be collected by the state.

### Influence of the Shang (Shāngcháo de yǐngxiǎng 商朝的影响)

At the height of its power, Shang influence extended over a remarkable range. Over five hundred sites that were connected culturally to the Shang, although not necessarily politically, have been found in areas that together would cover much of twenty-first-century China.

The Shang's influence did not end when the Zhou succeeded it in 1045 BCE. Its practice of ancestor worship would influence the way China was ruled for centuries to come. Other Shang traditions that carried on were the patrimonial system of passing on political power, elaborate burial rituals, and the use of fortunetelling as a way of deciding how to govern. One development of the Shang that reverberated through Chinese history was the advancement in metallurgy. Another was the beginning of writing, as etched on the bones and shells that appeared in pharmacist's shops more than three thousand years later.

## Zhou Dynasty: Bronze, Jade, and Confucius

Zhōu cháo: qīngtóng, yù, Kǒngzǐ
周朝: 青铜、玉、孔子
1045–256 BCE

**The transition from one Chinese dynasty to the next was rarely straightforward, and struggles between competing states of varying power and influence during individual dynasties were common. Such strife, internal and external, characterized the Zhou, the longest dynasty in China's history.**

**Its nearly eight-hundred-year reign is divided into two periods: the Western Zhou (西周 1045–771 BCE) and the Eastern Zhou (东周 770–221 BCE). The Eastern Zhou is further divided into the Spring and Autumn (Chūnqiū 春秋) Period (770–476 BCE) and the Warring States (Zhànguó 战国) Period (475–221 BCE).**

The original Zhou nation rose up in the Wèi River valley in Shaanxi (Shǎnxī 陕西). Oracle-bone records dating from the last stages of the Shang dynasty suggest that the Shang at times considered the Zhou group an enemy and at other times a tribute-paying subject. By around 1045 BCE, the Zhou had built a coalition of partners, including states that had been Shang subjects in northern Henan Province, and they destroyed Shang power in the region. The Zhou nation, founded by kings Wén 文 and Wǔ 武, was traditionally considered to foster humane treatment of its conquests and subjects, and to operate a system of utopian agrarian government. The establishment of the Zhou dynasty might have been the first case in Chinese history where the right to rule was based on an ethical justification instead of raw power.

## Mandate of Heaven (Tiānmìng 天命)

In texts compiled centuries later, this shift in power from Shang to Zhou was attributed to (and would then be called) the Mandate of Heaven. According to this concept, divine power could deem one king or group unfit to rule—in this case the increasingly corrupt and immoral Shang dynasty—and thus sanction a takeover by another more suitable (i.e., moral) ruler. By the eighth century BCE the Zhou coup was mythologized as a heroic military conquest commanded by heaven and carried out by the king.

By the Hàn 汉 period (206 BCE –220 CE), the *tiānmìng* concept was considered evidence that changes in political power mirrored shifts in a system of natural forces; a ruler's right to inherit power depended on keeping the favor of a higher power. The Mandate of Heaven theory became a permanent part of Chinese political thought.

### Thought Experiment

The Mandate of Heaven depended on four basic principles: (1) that the right to rule is granted by heaven; (2) that there can only be one ruler because there is only one heaven; (3) that the right to rule is based on ruling fairly, justly, and wisely; and (4) that the right to rule is not limited to one dynasty. What were the advantages and disadvantages, do you think, for a dynasty that claimed the right to rule?

Later Chinese reformers, all the way up until the end of the last Chinese dynasty, used it to frighten corrupt rulers.

## Western Zhou and Prosperity (Xīzhōu de fánróng 西周的繁荣)

Under the Shang, succession to the throne had passed from brother to brother, but the Zhou established the principle that successors should come from the next generation. The Zhou lineage ruled from the capital Zōngzhōu 宗州 (or Hàojīng 鎬京), located close to their ancestral burial grounds (near modern-day Xī'ān in Shaanxi Province). Over the next two centuries the Zhou rulers consolidated their power through military coercion and trade. They focused on controlling the resources essential to the tribute system of gift giving and award that they inherited from the Shang. Cowrie shells, bronze, and jade, all considered valuable in Shang religion, continued to be important to the Zhou. Although the Zhou initially worshiped the Shang spirits, by the mid-tenth century BCE their own ancestors had become icons of worship. The Zhou rewarded their subjects with sacrificial vessels, ritual clothing, wine, and lands suitable for food production. In return, gift recipients used these items to present mortuary feasts to the Zhou ancestral spirits. The sophistication of Zhou bronze vessels, carved jade, and musical instruments shows that the dynasty, the last one of

**Zhou dynasty spade-shaped money, cast from bronze, was hollow-handled and smaller than a real digging tool.** PHOTO BY JOAN LEBOLD COHEN.