

ANCIENT CHINA

Elements of Civilization

Pronunciations

- Huang He hwahng he
- Shang shong
- Zhou Joe
- Loess less
- Henan hey – nahn
- Wei way
- Qin chin

The Earliest Settlements

- **8000 B.C.E., Neolithic pottery was discovered in China's western Henan province.**
- **Also discovered was a set of tiny flutes made from the wing bones of a large bird.**
- **Farmers grew millet, wheat and rice and domesticated pigs, dogs, goats, and maybe horses.**
- **They lived in river valleys and had walls for defense.**
- **Warriors used chariots to defeat their enemies.**



Background

- Rivers were important to the development of China
- Landforms and climate also influenced the culture
- There were many differences in climate throughout China
- Monsoons bring rains from the South China Sea towards the southern half of China
 - ▣ The rain does not reach the northern, cooler part of China
 - ▣ The climate there is very dry, people depended on Rivers

Background

- What is the “Middle Kingdom?”
 - ▣ Geographic barriers like mountains and seas cut China off from other lands
 - ▣ They had no knowledge of other cultures like Greece, Rome, India, or Egypt
 - ▣ They thought that they were at the center of the world and called themselves the “Middle Kingdom”

China's Geography

The development of civilization in early China was aided by features like long rivers, fertile soils, temperate climates, and isolated valleys.

Rivers, Soils, Climates

- China's first civilizations developed in river valleys
- Two major rivers supplied water for earliest civilizations
 - Chang Jiang, also called Yangzi
 - Huang He, or Yellow River
 - Both flow east from Plateau of Tibet to Yellow Sea

Loess

- Annual floods deposited rich soil, **loess**, on flood plains
- Valley of Huang He particularly fertile due to loess
 - Fine dusty soil
 - Carried into China by desert winds

China's Geography

Beginnings of Civilization

- Archaeological discoveries suggest Chinese civilization began in Huang He valley
- People started growing crops there 9,000 years ago

Xia

- Legend says earliest Chinese ruled by Xia dynasty
- No written, archaeological evidence Xia dynasty existed
- Most historians date beginning of Chinese civilization to rise of Shang dynasty

Crops

- Most of eastern China covered with fertile soils; some regions better suited than others for growing certain crops
- Southern China—warm, receives plenty of rainfall, excellent region for growing rice
- Further north—climate cooler, drier; suitable for grains, wheat, millet

Isolation

- Combination of rivers for irrigation, fertile soil for planting allowed Chinese to thrive, as did China's relative isolation
- Mountains, hills, desert protected China from invasion
- Himalaya Mountains separate southern China from India, rest of southern Asia; vast Gobi Desert prevented reaching China from west

Background

- Early civilizations developed near rivers
- China had a few rivers that provided resources to be successful
 - ▣ Chang Jiang River (longest river)
 - ▣ Huang He River
 - ▣ Yangzi River
- China's rivers overflowed just like others we have studied
 - ▣ Provides fertile soil for farming
- The Huang He River is also known as the Yellow River because of the Loess
 - ▣ Loess is yellow-brown soil that the Yellow River carries along

Background

- What is “China’s Sorrow?”
 - ▣ The river was unpredictable and dangerous and often killed
 - ▣ The river also brought life through fertile soil
 - ▣ Destructive floods would come without warning
 - ▣ To control the flooding the people built dikes or walls that hold back water

Summarize

What geographic features influenced life in early China?

Answer(s): Rivers deposited rich soil for farming; mountains, hills, and desert isolated the area.

New Philosophies

The conflicts of the late Zhou period led many Chinese thinkers to question the nature of society and people's roles in it.

Effort to make sense of chaos led to creation of many new Chinese philosophies, or ways of looking at the world

Of many philosophies created during late Zhou period, two became influential in later Chinese history:

- **Confucianism**
- **Daoism**

Confucianism

Confucius

- Confucianism based on teachings of scholar named Kongfuzi, better known as Confucius, who thought people should treat one another humanely
- Should express love, respect for others, honor one's ancestors

Love and Respect

- Believed that love, respect had disappeared and was responsible for violence in society; restoring respect for tradition would make society stable
- Thoughts on how to improve society collected in book, *Analects*

Analects

- Ruler should treat subjects fairly; subjects reward ruler with respect, loyalty
- People should respect members of family, devote selves to public service
- Confucian ideas spread elsewhere in Asia, including Korea, Japan, Vietnam

Confucianism

- K'ung Fu Tze
 - Born in 551 BC
 - Lived during Zhou/Chou dynasty
 - Time of lax morality
 - Wandered through many states, advising rulers
- Writing
 - Dealt with individual morality
 - Political power of rulers
 - Social ethics
- Afterlife
 - Similar to Buddhist or Taoist

Confucianism

□ *The Five Relationships*

- ruler and people
- parent and child
- older brother and younger brother
- husband and wife
- between friend and friend

Confucianism

- Parts of teaching
 - Li: includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc
 - Hsiao: love within the family
 - love of parents for their children
 - Love of children for their parents
 - Yi: righteousness
 - Xin: honesty and trustworthiness
 - Jen: benevolence, humaneness towards others; **the highest Confucian virtue**
 - Chung: loyalty to the state
- Important texts – the Si Shu
 - Lun Yu: the analects of Confucius
 - Chung Yung: doctrine of the mean
 - Ta Hsueh: the greatest learning
 - Meng Tzu: analects of philosopher Meng Tzu

Daoism

Definition

- Unlike Confucianism, which focuses on improving society, Daoism encourages people to retreat from laws of society, yield to law of nature
- Heart of Daoism is concept of the dao, or the way
- Dao is the limitless force that is part of all creation
- Through the dao, all things in nature connected
- Finding one's place in nature allows person to achieve harmony with universe

Yin and Yang

- Daoism embraced Chinese concept of yin and yang, representing balancing aspect of nature—male, female; dark, light; hot, cold
- Neither can exist without other
- Important for two to remain balanced for perfect harmony
- Origins of Daoist teachings attributed to philosopher named Laozi
- Wrote book called *Dao De Jing*
- Laozi worshipped by some as a god

Chinese Philosophers

CONFUCIUS

551–479 BC



Known in Chinese as Kongfuzi or Master Kong, the man known in the West as Confucius was born to a poor but noble family. From a young age, he was an eager student, constantly asking questions in order to learn more. As an adult, he became a teacher, the first in China to try to make education available to all children, regardless of their social class. He viewed education as the only way to improve oneself.

As he grew older, Confucius held several positions in local government. He also attracted followers to his teachings. By the time he died, Confucius had more than 3,000 followers.

LAOZI

500s BC



Little is known of the life of Laozi, the recorded author of the *Dao De Jing*, the major work of Daoist philosophy. According to one ancient historian who lived four centuries after Laozi is said to have died, Laozi had served as the official historian for a powerful noble. The same historian recorded that Laozi once met Confucius, who was younger than Laozi and quite pleased to meet the older philosopher.

Some historians believe that the *Dao De Ching* was not written by a single person but by several writers over a long period. Nonetheless, Daoists continue to honor the memory of Laozi as its creator.

Compare What similarities can you see in the lives of Confucius and Laozi? How were the two different?

Taoism

- Loa Tsu (Lao Tzu, Laozi, Loatze)
 - ▣ Lived approx. 604-531 BC
 - ▣ Lived in a feudal society with lots of warfare
 - ▣ Wrote book: Tao-te-Chine (the way of virtue)
- Tao (Dao)
 - ▣ The path or the way (undefinable)
 - ▣ Way to avoid conflict (esp feudal conflict)
 - ▣ Power which surrounds and flows through all things

Taoism



- Balance – between 2 extremes
 - no love with out hate
 - no peace without war
 - no male without female
 - no light without dark
- Believers goal: be one with the Tao
- Gods are manifestations of the Tao
- Time is cyclical, not linear
- Yin & Yang
 - Yin formed breath of earth
 - Yang formed the breath of heaven
 - Pair of opposites seen through out the universe
 - Intervention of human civilization has upset balance

Taoism

- Chi (air, breath)
 - ▣ Life force that has been entrusted to each person
 - ▣ Developing one's virtues nurtures the Chi
 - ▣ Being nice to another means they will reciprocate the kindness
 - ▣ Believe people are compassionate by nature
- Feng Shui (wind & water)
 - ▣ Consult Chinese calendar for birth sign
 - ▣ Use I-Ching (book of changes)
 - ▣ Creates balance between ying/yang, 5 elements and environment
 - ▣ Seeks to maximize balance of Chi
 - Simple balance – no clutter
 - Sharp angles bad – cut the Chi

Some Lasting Effects

Daoism eventually proved less influential than Confucianism in Chinese history

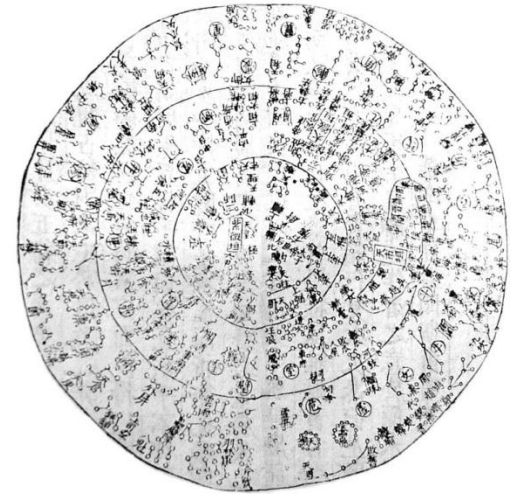
- Still played major role in later dynasties
- Idea of balance key concept in China for centuries as result of Daoist teaching
- Daoist philosophy led many followers to work for preservation, protection of natural environment

The Mandate of Heaven

The Mandate of Heaven developed during the Zhou Dynasty and dominated Chinese thought well into the 20th Century.

It is based on four principles:

- ❑ **The right to rule is granted by Heaven.**
- ❑ **There is only one Heaven; therefore, there can be only one ruler.**
- ❑ **The right to rule is based on the virtue of the ruler, which serves as a check on the ruler's power.**
- ❑ **The right to rule is not limited to one dynasty, which justifies rebellion as long as the rebellion is successful.**



Early Evidence of Writing

- ❑ Oracle bones—bones of birds, animals, and shells of turtles—were inscribed with markings and writings for use in predicting the future.
- ❑ After they were marked, these bones were placed in a fire and tapped lightly with a rod until they began to crack.
- ❑ The cracks were then interpreted by specialists in predicting the future.
- ❑ Oracle bones were used as early as the Zhou Dynasty

