

# 3.4

## **Ancient Civilizations in China**

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## As a Young Historian, I will be able to...

- Understand how geography influenced early Chinese civilization.
- Analyze how Chinese culture took shape under the Shang and Zhou dynasties.
- Describe the origins, central ideas, and spread of Confucianism and Daoism.
- List some achievements made in early China.



# **Geography Influences Chinese Civilization**

**To the west & southwest of China, there was  
Tien Shan desert & the Himalayas**

**The southeast was made up of rainforests**

**The Gobi desert was towards the North...**

**...and the Pacific oceans to the east. How does this  
affect civilization?**





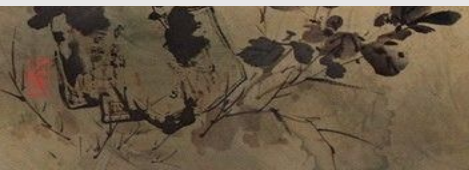
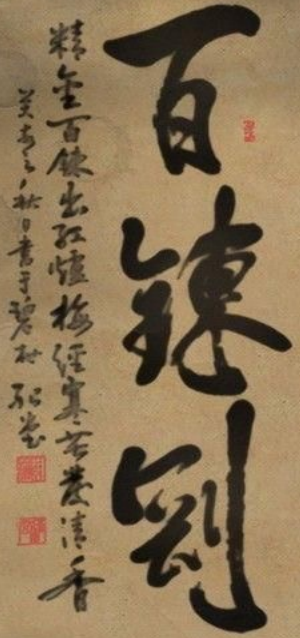
# Regions of China

The heartland of China settled near the Huan & Chang river to support irrigation

Nomads would often plunder the Chinese regions, but would be absorbed into the culture

**Loess-** fine windblown yellow soil carried from Mongolia, reason that river called Huang (yellow)

Huang nicknamed “River of Sorrow” due to constant rising water levels.





# Shang Dynasty Begins to Form China

Chinas first dynasty was the Shang Dynasty & ruled Yellow River Valley until 1122 B.C.

Capital was walled city at Anyang, keeping nomads to the North of China

**Clans-** Groups of families who claim a common ancestor

Social classes of a royal family & warriors at top, then artisans, finally peasants who worked in fields





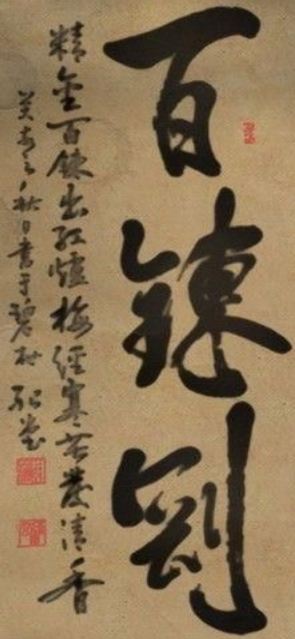
# The Zhou Dynasty

The Zhou (joh) people overthrow the Shang in 1122 B.C. & hold power until 256 B.C.

**Mandate of Heaven-** The divine right to rule, Zhou thought Shang King had outraged the gods

**Dynastic cycle-** Belief on how a government rises & falls

The belief that world catastrophes such as a flood or famine showed rulers lost favor with the gods





# Feudal State is Established

**Feudalism-** System of government in which local lords governed own lands, but owed military service & support for ruler

Economic expanse arose due to iron works & upgrades in farming

Feudal lords began to ignore the Zhou rulers & battled each other in wars

Qin (chin) Dynasty rose when the Zhou fell





# Religious Beliefs in Early China

**Shang Di** was the supreme being & kings were a link between the people & the supreme being

Gods would not listen to the mortals & emperors were called the Son of Heaven.

The spirits of the ancestors were called upon to bring good fortune to the family

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# Two Major Belief Systems

**Confucius-** Philosopher who sought wisdom & tried to educate students to his ideas

His students collected his sayings in the **Analects-** which offered advice for a good & honorable life

**Philosophy-** System of ideas, Confucius believed in ensuring social order rather than salvation

Harmony results from people accepting place in society. **Filial Piety-** respect for parents



# Confucius Ideas

**Ruler had a responsibility to provide a good government for people**

**Education also highly valued as “education & practice set men apart”**

**Yin & Yang believed in a delicate balance between the light & darkness**

**Ideas are still important today.**

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# Daoism

**Belief that people should strive to live in harmony with nature**

**Laozi-** “Old Master” who wrote The Way of Virtue on how to live a good life

**Daoist's rejected the world of conflict & strife & emphasized the art of yielding**

**Daoism evolved into a religion & some would enter into alchemy**





# Achievements in Early China

**Astronomers studied Haley's comet & the movement of the stars**

**The Chinese cultivated silkworms to make silk & mulberry trees (that silk worm fed on)**

**Oracle bones-** Priests used these to predict the future by heating bones or shells

**Characters-** Written Symbols &  
**Calligraphy-** Turning writing into an art form

