

7

Other Empires

Urban Life and Imperial Majesty in China and India



THINKING AHEAD

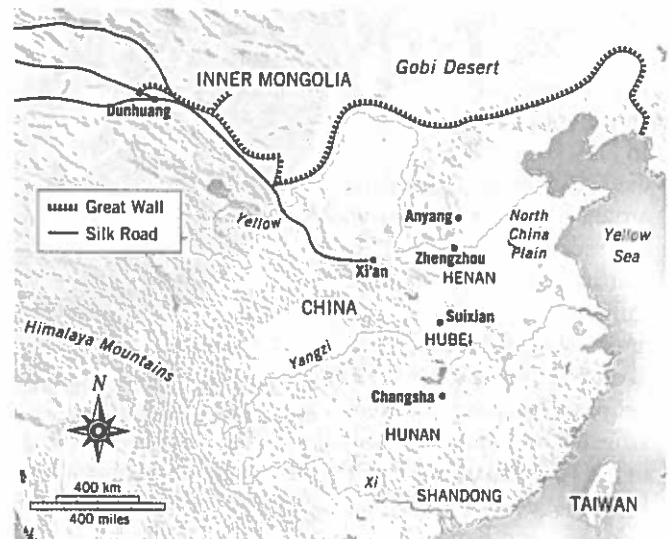
What were early China's lasting contributions to Chinese civilization?

How was China unified as an empire?

How did religious outlooks shape ancient India?

The North China plain lies in the large, fertile valley of the Yellow River (Map 7.1). Around 7000 BCE, when the valley's climate was much milder and the land more forested than it is today, the peoples inhabiting this fertile region began to cultivate the soil, growing primarily millet. Archeologists recognize at least three separate cultural groups in this region during this period, distinguished by their different pottery styles and works in jade. As Neolithic tribal people, they used stone tools, and although they domesticated animals very early on, they maintained the shamanistic practices of their hunter-gatherer heritage. Later inhabitants of this region would call this area the "Central Plain" because they believed it was the center of their country. During the ensuing millennia, Chinese culture in the Central Plain coalesced in ways that parallel developments in the Middle East and Greece during the same period, as China transformed itself from an agricultural society into a more urban-centered state.

By the third century BCE, at about the same time that Rome began establishing its imperial authority over the Mediterranean world, the government of China was sufficiently unified that it could build a Great Wall (Fig. 7.1) across the hills north of the Central Plain to protect the realm from the intruding Central Asians who lived beyond its



Map 7.1 Map of China, 1000–200 BCE.

northern borders. Some sections of the wall were already in place, built in previous centuries to protect local areas. These were rebuilt and connected to define a frontier stretching some 1,500 miles from northeast to northwest China. New roads and canal systems were built linking the entire nation, a

◀ **Fig. 7.1** The Great Wall, near Beijing, China. Begun late third century BCE. Length approx. 4,100 miles, average height 25'. In the third century BCE, the Chinese Emperor Shihuangdi ordered his army to reconstruct, link, and augment walls on the northern frontier of China in order to form a continuous barrier protecting his young country from northern Mongol "barbarians."

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large salaried bureaucracy was established, and a new imperial government headed by an emperor collected taxes, codified the law, and exerted control over a domain of formerly rival territories. Unification—first achieved here by the Qin dynasty—has remained a preeminent problem throughout China's long history.

This ritual jade disc, or *bi* [bee], made sometime in the fourth or third century BCE (Fig. 7.2), is emblematic of the continuity of Chinese historical traditions and ethnic identity. The earliest *bi* disks are found in burials dating from around 4000 BCE, and are thought to be part of the archaic paraphernalia of the shaman. While their original significance is unknown, by the time this one was made they were said to symbolize heaven. This example is decorated with a dragon and two tigers, auspicious symbols likewise emerging from China's prehistoric past. The first part of this chapter surveys the rise of the Chinese culture into a unified state capable of such an enormous undertaking as the Great Wall as well as the artistic refinement of the jade *bi* disk seen here.

At the same time, another culture was developing in the river valleys of the Asian subcontinent of India. In both China and India, national literatures arose, as did religious and philosophical practices that continue to this day and are influential worldwide. But in the ancient world, East and West had not yet met. The peoples of the Mediterranean world and those living in the Yellow and Indus River valleys were isolated from one another. As trade routes stretched across the Asian continent, these cultures would eventually cross paths. Gradually, Indian thought, especially Buddhism, would find its way into China, and Chinese goods would find their way to the West. Even more gradually, intellectual developments in ancient China and India, from Daoism to the teachings of Confucius [kun-FYOO-shus] and Buddha [BOO-duh], would come to influence cultural practice in the Western world. But throughout the period studied in this chapter, up until roughly 200 CE, the cultures of China and India developed independently of those in the West.

EARLY CHINESE CULTURE

Very few of the built edifices of ancient Chinese civilization have been found. We know that by the middle of the second millennium BCE, Chinese leaders ruled from large capitals, rivaling those in the West in their size and splendor. Beneath present-day Zhengzhou [juhng-joe], for instance, lies an early metropolitan center with massive earthen walls. Stone was scarce in this area, but abundant forests made wood plentiful, so it was used to build cities. As impressive as they were, cities built of wood were vulnerable to fire and military attack, and no sign of them remains. Nevertheless, we know a fair amount about early Chinese culture from the remains of its written language and the tombs of its rulers. Even the most ancient Chinese writing—found on oracle bones and ceremonial bronze vessels—is closely related to modern Chinese. And archeologists discovered that royal Chinese tombs, like Egyptian burial sites, contain furnishings, implements, luxury goods, and clothing that—together with the written record—give us a remarkably vivid picture of ancient China.

Chinese Calligraphy

Sometime during the Bronze Age, the Chinese developed a writing system that used individual pictographic characters to stand for distinct ideas and specific spoken words. According to Chinese legend, this writing system was invented by the culture-hero Fu Xi [foo shee] (who also taught the clans to hunt and fish), inspired by both the constellations and bird and animal footprints. Abundant surviving examples of writing from around 1400 to 1200 BCE—engraved with a sharp point on oracle bones made of turtle plastrons and ox scapula—record answers received from the spirit world during rituals asking about the future. We know as much as we do about the day-to-day concerns of the early Chinese rulers from these oracular fragments, on which a special order of priests, or diviners, posed questions of importance and concern (Fig. 7.3). They might ask about the harvest, the outcome of a war, the threat of flood, the course of an illness, or the wisdom of an administrative decision. To find answers, bones were heated with hot pokers, causing fissures to form with a loud crack. The patterns of these fissures were interpreted, and the bones were then inscribed. The first Chinese signs were pictograms, which, as in

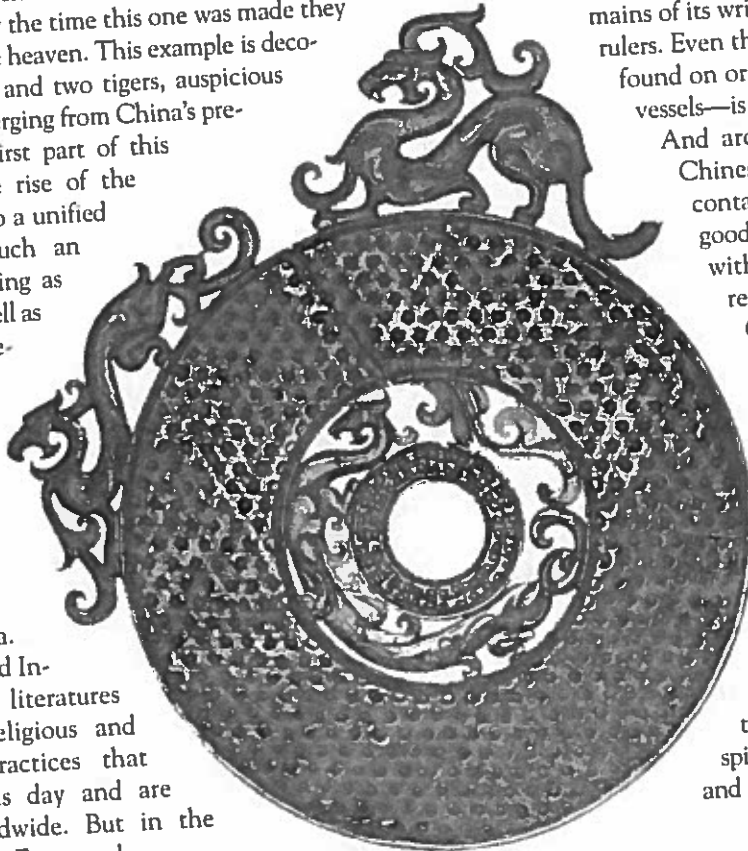


Fig. 7.2 Ritual disc (*bi*) with dragon and phoenix motif. Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period, fourth–third century BCE. Jade, diameter 6 1/4". The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust 33-81. This disc was discovered in a tomb, probably placed there because the Chinese believed that jade preserved the body from decay.



Fig. 7.3 Inscribed oracle bone. Shang period, ca. 1765–1122 BCE. The priests inscribed the characters representing the question from top to bottom in columns.

Mesopotamia, soon became stylized, particularly after the brush became the principal writing instrument (see Chapter 2, *Closer Look*, pages 38–39 for comparison.) The essence of Chinese written language is that a single written character has a fairly fixed significance, no matter how its pronunciation might vary over time or from place to place. This stability of meaning has allowed the Chinese language to remain remarkably constant through the ages. In the figure above right, 3,000 years separate the characters on the right from those on the left (Fig. 7.4).

The Shang Dynasty (ca. 1700–105 BCE)

Chinese records say that King Tang established the Shang dynasty. The Shang state was a linked collection of villages, stretching across the plains of the lower Yellow River valley. But it was not a contiguous state with distinct borders; other villages separated some of the Shang villages from



Fig. 7.4 Chinese characters. Shown are ancient characters (left) and modern ones (right). From top to bottom, they mean "sun," "mountain," "tree," "middle," "field," "frontier," and "door."

one another, and were frequently at war with the Shang. The royal family surrounded itself with shamans, who soon developed into a kind of nobility and, in turn, walled urban centers formed around the nobles' palaces or temples. The proliferation of bronze vessels, finely carved jades, and luxury goods produced for the Shang elite suggests that well-organized centers of craft production were located nearby. The Shang nobility organized itself into armies—surviving inscriptions describe forces as large as 13,000 men—that controlled the countryside and protected the king.

The Book of Changes: The First Classic Chinese Text The Shang priests were avid interpreters of oracle bones. From a modern Western perspective, cracks in burnt bones are a matter of pure chance, but to the Shang, no event was merely random. The belief that the cosmos is pervaded by a greater logic and order lies at the heart of Chinese culture. In other words, there is no such thing as chance, and no

transformation is without significance, not even a crack in a bone. The challenge lies in conducting one's affairs in accordance with the transformations of the cosmos.

The first classic of Chinese literature, *The Book of Changes*, or *Yi Jing*, compiled later from ideas that developed in the Shang era, is a guide to interpreting the workings of the universe. A person seeking to understand some aspect of his or her life or situation poses a question and tosses a set of straws or coins. The arrangement they make when they fall leads to one of 64 readings (or hexagrams) in the *Yi Jing*. (Fu Xi, the culture-hero who invented writing, is also said to have invented the eight trigrams that combine in pairs to form the 64 hexagrams.) Each hexagram describes the circumstances of the specific moment, which is, as the title suggests, always a moment of transition, a movement from one set of circumstances to the next. The *Yi Jing* prescribes certain behaviors appropriate to the moment. Thus, it is a book of wisdom.

This wisdom is based on a simple principle—that order derives from balance, a concept that the Chinese share with the ancient Egyptians. The Chinese believe that over time, through a series of changes, all things work toward a condition of balance. Thus, when things are out of balance, diviners might reliably predict the future by understanding that the universe tends to right itself. For example the eleventh hexagram, entitled *T'ai [tie]*, or "Peace," indicated the unification of heaven and earth. The image reads:

Heaven and earth unite: the image of PEACE.
 Thus the ruler
 Divides and completes the course of heaven and earth,
 And so aids the people.

In fact, according to the Shang rulers, "the foundation of the universe" is based on the marriage of *Qian* [chee-an] (at once heaven and the creative male principle) and *Kun* (the earth, or receptive female principle), symbolized by the Chinese symbol of *yin-yang* (Fig. 7.5). *Yin* is soft, dark, moist, and cool; *yang* is hard, bright, dry, and warm. The two combine to create the endless cycles of change, from night to day, across the four seasons of the year. They balance the five elements

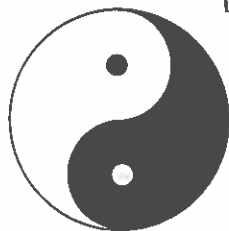


Fig. 7.5 Yin-yang symbol.

(wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) and the five powers of creation (cold, heat, dryness, moisture, and wind). The *yin-yang* sign, then, is a symbol of harmonious integration, the perpetual interplay and mutual relation among all things. And note that each side contains a circle of the same values as its opposite—neither side can exist without the other.

Shang Bronze The interlocking of opposites illustrated by the *yin-yang* motif is also present in the greatest artistic achievement of the Shang, their bronze casting. In order to cast bronze, a negative shape must be perfected first, into which the molten metal is then poured to make a positive



Fig. 7.6 Five-eared *ding* with dragon pattern. ca. 1200 BCE. Bronze, height 48", diameter at mouth, 32 1/4". Chinhua County Cultural Museum. One of the key features of Shang bronze decoration is the bilateral symmetry of the animal motifs, suggesting the importance of balance and order in ancient Chinese culture.

shape. Through the manufacture of ritual vessels, the Shang developed an extremely sophisticated bronze-casting technology, as advanced as any ever used. Made for offerings of food, water, and wine during ceremonies of ancestor worship, these bronze vessels were kept in the ancestral hall and brought out for banquets. Like formal dinnerware, each type of vessel had a specific shape and purpose; the *ding* (Fig. 7.6), for example, was used for cooked food.

The conduct of the ancestral rites was the most solemn duty of a family head, with explicit religious and political significance. While the vessel shapes derived from the shapes of Neolithic pottery, in bronze they gradually became decorated with fantastic, supernatural creatures, especially dragons. For the Shang, the bronzes came to symbolize political power and authority. Leaders made gifts of bronze as tokens of political patronage, and strict rules governed the number of bronzes a family might possess according to rank. Like the oracle bones, many of these bronzes are inscribed with written characters.

At the last Shang capital and royal burial center, Yinxi [yin-shoo] (modern Anyang [ahn-yahng]), archeologists have unearthed the undisturbed royal tomb of Lady Fu Hao [foo how] (died ca. 1250 BCE), consort to the king Wu Ding. Consisting of a deep pit over which walled buildings were constructed as ritual sites to honor the dead, Lady Fu Hao's grave contained the skeletons of horses and dogs; about 440 cast and decorated bronzes,

which probably originally held food and drink; 600 jade objects; chariots; lacquered items; weapons; gold and silver ornaments; and about 7,000 cowrie shells, which the Shang used as money. One of the most remarkable objects found in her grave is an ivory goblet inlaid with turquoise (Fig. 7.7). Ivory was a local product, harvested from elephants that ranged, in the warmer Chinese climate of 3,000 years ago, much farther north than today. But the turquoise had to have come from far away. The goblet has a handle in the shape of a bird with a hooked beak, and a similar bird has been found far to the south in Sichuan province at a site roughly contemporary with Fu Hao's tomb, suggesting the jade's source. In addition, the turquoise inlay forms horned monsters with two bodies reminiscent of those seen on Shang bronze. As in Sumerian royal burials, Lady Fu Hao was not buried alone. The bodies of 16 people, apparently slaves, were found in the grave. Whether they submitted voluntarily to their deaths is a matter of pure conjecture.



Fig. 7.7 Ivory goblet inlaid with turquoise. ca. 1200 BCE. Height 8". From Tomb 5, Xiaotun Locus North, at Yinxi, Anyang, Henan Province. Excavated in 1976. The Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing. Both the ivory and the turquoise inlay have been heavily restored.

Though geographically separate, the Bronze Age tombs of the Sumerians, Egyptians, Mycenaeans, and Shang demonstrate the widespread belief in life after death. They also testify to the enormous wealth that Bronze Age rulers were capable of accumulating.

The Zhou Dynasty (1027–256 BCE)

The Shang believed that their leaders were the sole conduit to the heavenly ancestors. However, in 1027 BCE, a rebel tribe known as the Zhou [joe] overthrew the Shang dynasty, claiming that the Shang had lost the Mandate of Heaven by not ruling virtuously. The Zhou asserted that the legitimacy of a ruler derived from divine approval, and that the Shang had lost this favor because of their decadent extravagances. Even so, the Zhou took measures to intermarry with the elite whom they had overthrown and took pains to conserve and restore what they admired of Shang culture. In fact, both the *Book of Changes* and the yin-yang symbol were originated by the Shang but codified and written down by the Zhou.

The Zhou ushered in an era of cultural refinement and philosophical accomplishment. One example is the oldest collection of Chinese poetry, the *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing* [she jee-ung]), still taught in Chinese schools today. According to tradition, government officials were sent into the countryside to record the lyrics of songs that expressed the feelings of the people. The collection that survives, first compiled by the Zhou, consists of 305 poems from between the eleventh and seventh centuries BCE. The poems address almost every aspect of life. There are love poems, songs celebrating the king's rule, sacrificial hymns, and folk songs. Descriptions of nature abound—over 100 kinds of plants are mentioned, as well as 90 kinds of animals and insects. Marriage practices, family life, clothing, and food are all subjects of poems. One of the oldest celebrates the harvest as an expression of the family's harmony with nature, the symbol that the family's ancestors are part of the same natural cycle of life and death, planting and harvest, as the universe as a whole (Reading 7.1a; for more selections from the *Book of Songs*, see Reading 7.1, page 237):

READING 7.1a

from the *Book of Songs*

Abundant is the year, with much millet, much rice;
But we have tall granaries,
To hold myriads, many myriads and millions of grain.
We make wine, make sweet liquor,
We offer it to ancestor, to ancestor,
We use it to fulfill all the rites,
To bring down blessings upon each and all.

Zhou Music The *Book of Songs* lists 29 different types of percussion, wind, and stringed instruments. The Chinese classified their instruments according to from which of

eight different materials they were made: bronze (bells), bamboo (flutes), bone (flutes), clay (simple wind instruments), animal skin (drums), calabash (mouth-organs), and wood (zithers and lutes with silk strings). Like the Shang, the Zhou were masterful bronze artisans, and they carried this mastery into crafting their bells. A magnificent set of bronze bells (Fig. 7.8), found in the tomb of Marquis Yi [MAR-kee yee] of Zeng [dzung], brother of the Zhou ruler, gives us some feeling for the accomplishment of the Zhou in both bronze and music. The carillon consists of 65 bells, each capable of producing two distinct tones when hit either at the center or the rim. Thus, musicians playing the carillon had 130 different pitches or notes (compared to 88 on a modern piano) available in octaves of up to 10 notes. Seven zithers, two pipes, three flutes, and three drums were also found in the tomb (together with the bodies of eight young women and a dog). It is reasonable to suppose that these bells and instruments were designed for ceremonial and ritual use, as well as the simple pleasure of Marquis Yi.

Spiritual Beliefs: Daoism and Confucianism The songs in the *Shi jing* are contemporary with the poems that make up the *Dao de jing* [dow duh jee-ung] (*The Way and Its Power*), the primary philosophical treatise, written in verse, of Daoism, the Chinese mystical school of thought. The *Dao* ("the way") is deeply embedded in nature, and to attain it, the individual must accord by it, by "not-doing." (It is said that those who speak about the *Dao* do not know of it, and those who know about the *Dao*, do not speak of it.) The book, probably composed in the third century BCE, is traditionally ascribed to Lao Zi [lou zuh] ("the Old One") who lived during the sixth

century BCE. In essence, it argues for a unifying principle in all nature, the interchangeability of energy and matter, a principle the Chinese call *qi* [chee]. The *qi* can be understood only by those who live in total simplicity, and to this end the Daoist engages in strict dietary practices, breathing exercises, and meditation. In considering such images as the one expressed in the following poem, the first in the volume, the Daoist finds his or her way to enlightenment (Reading 7.2):

READING 7.2

from the *Dao de jing*

There are ways but the Way is uncharted;
There are names but not nature in words;
Nameless indeed is the source of creation
But things have a mother and she has a name.

The secret waits for the insight
Of eyes unclouded by longing;
Those who are bound by desire
See only the outward container.

These two come paired but distinct
By their names.
Of all things profound,
Say that their pairing is deepest,
The gate to the root of the world.

The final stanza seems to be a direct reference to the principle of yin-yang, itself a symbol of the *qi*. But the chief argument here, and the outlook of Daoism as a whole, is that enlightenment lies neither in the visible world nor in

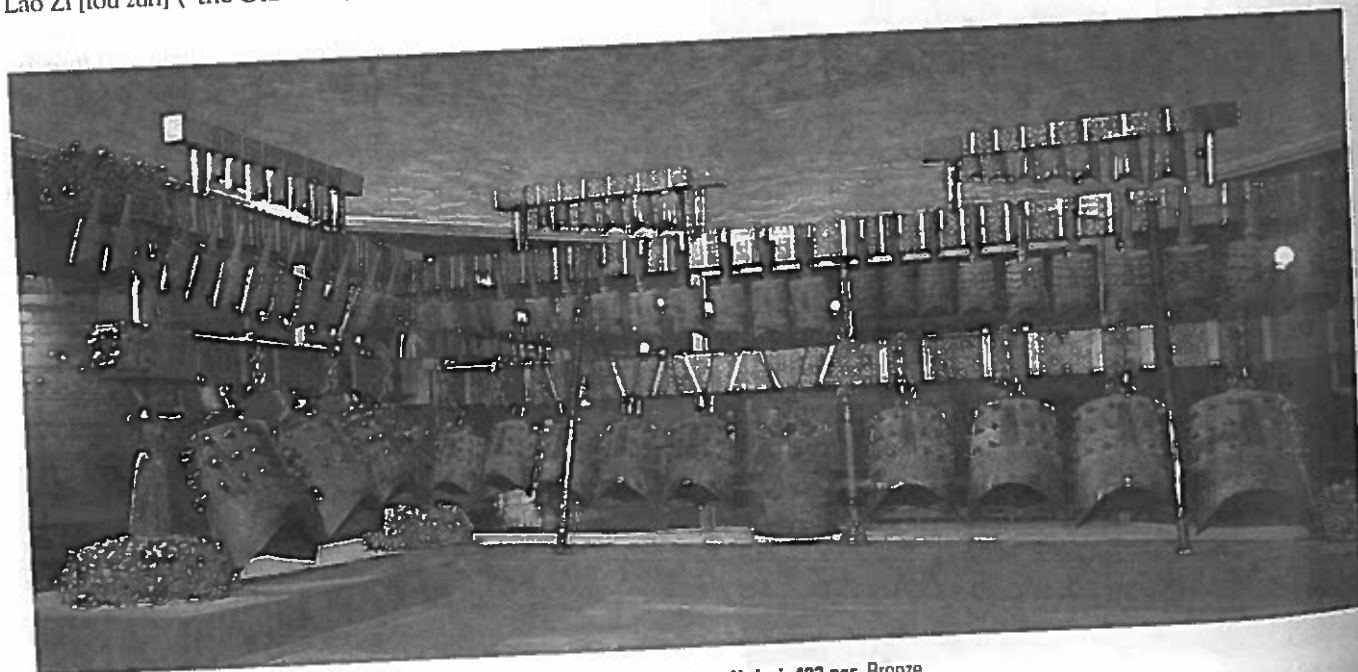


Fig. 7.8 Set of 65 bronze bells, from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, Suixian, Hubei, 433 BCE. Bronze, frame, frame height 9', length 25'. Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan. Each of these bells is inscribed with the names of its two notes and with a *taotie*, a masklike image combining animal and human features that is found on many ritual bronze objects. Similar half-animal half-human figures are painted on Marquis Yi's coffin, suggesting that the ancient Chinese connected the afterlife with these supernatural figures.



Fig. 7.9 *Admonitions of the Imperial Instructress to Court Ladies (detail)*, attributed to Gu Kaizhi. Six Dynasties period, ca. 344–464 CE. Handscroll, ink, and colors on silk, 9 3/4" × 11'6". © The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY. This handscroll, painted nearly 900 years after the death of Confucius, shows his impact on Chinese culture.

language, although to find the “way” one must, paradoxically, pass through or use both. Daoism thus represents a spiritual desire to transcend the material world.

If Daoism sought to leave the world behind, another great canon of teachings developed during the Zhou dynasty sought to define the proper way to behave in the world. For 550 years, from about 771 BCE to the final collapse of the Zhou in 221 BCE, China was subjected to ever greater political turmoil as warring political factions struggled for power. Reacting to this state of affairs was the man many consider China’s greatest philosopher and teacher, Kong Fuzi [kung-fu-zuh], or, as he is known in the West, Confucius.

Confucius was born to aristocratic parents in the province of Shandong in 551 BCE, the year before Peisistratus [pie-SIS-trah-tus] came to power in Athens. By his early twenties, Confucius had begun to teach a way of life, now referred to as Confucianism, based on self-discipline and proper relations among people. If each individual led a virtuous life, then the family would live in harmony. If the family lived in harmony, then the village would follow its moral leadership. If the village exercised proper behavior toward its neighbor villages, then the country would live in peace and thrive.

Traditional Chinese values—values that Confucius believed had once guided the Zhou, such as self-control, propriety, reverence for one’s elders, and virtuous behavior—lie at the core of this system. Tradition has it that Confucius compiled and edited *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Songs* (which he edited down to 305 verses), and four other “classic” Chinese texts: *The Book of History*, containing speeches and pronouncements of historical rulers; *The Book of Rites*, which is essentially a code of conduct; *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, a history of China up to the fifth century BCE; and a lost treatise on music.

Confucius particularly valued *The Book of Songs*. “My little ones,” he told his followers, “why don’t you study the

Songs? Poetry will exalt you, make you observant, enable you to mix with others, provide an outlet for your vexations; you learn from it immediately to serve your parents and ultimately to serve your prince. It also provides wide acquaintance with the names of birds, beasts, and plants.”

After his death, in 479 BCE, Confucius’s followers transcribed their conversations with him in a book known in English as the *Analects*. (For a selection, see **Reading 7.3** on page 238.) Where the *Dao de jing* is a spiritual work, the *Analects* is a practical one. At the heart of Confucius’s teaching is the principle of *li* [lee]—propriety in the conduct of the rites of ancestor worship. The courtesy and dignity required when performing the rites lead to the second principle, *ren*, or benevolent compassion and fellow feeling, the ideal relationship that should exist among all people. Based on respect for oneself, *ren* extends this respect to all others, manifesting itself as charity, courtesy, and above all, justice. *De* [duh], or virtue, is the power of moral example that an individual, especially a ruler, can exert through a life dedicated to the exercise of *li* and *ren*. Finally, *wen*, or culture, will result. Poetry, music, painting, and the other arts will all reveal an inherent order and harmony reflecting the inherent order and harmony of the state. Like an excellent leader, brilliance in the arts illuminates virtue. The Chinese moral order depended not upon divine decree or authority, but instead upon the people’s own right actions. A scene from a painted handscroll of a later period, known as *Admonitions of the Imperial Instructress to Court Ladies* (Fig. 7.9), illustrates a Confucian story of wifely virtue and proper behavior. As the viewer unrolled the scroll (handscrolls were not meant to be viewed all at once, as displayed in modern museums, but unrolled right to left a foot or two at a time, as a tabletop might allow), he or she would observe a bear, who having escaped from his cage threatens the Emperor, seated at the right. Until two guards arrive to try to keep the bear at bay, Lady Feng [fung] has stepped forward, courageously

placing herself between the bear and her lord. She illustrates the fifth rule of Confucian philosophy—*yi* [yee], or duty, the obligation of the wife to her husband and of the subject to her ruler.

Its emphasis on respect for age, authority, and morality made Confucianism extremely popular among Chinese leaders and the artists they patronized. It embraced the emperor, the state, and the family in a single ethical system with a hierarchy that was believed to mirror the structure of the cosmos. As a result, the Han [hahn] dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) adopted Confucianism as the Chinese state religion, and a thorough knowledge of the Confucian classics was subsequently required of any politically ambitious person. Despite the later ascendancy among intellectuals of Daoism and Buddhism (which would begin to flourish in China after the collapse of the Han dynasty, Confucianism continued to be the core of civil service training in China until 1911, when the Chinese Republic ended the dynastic system. Even though Mao Zedong [mao zuh-dong], chairman of the Chinese Communist Party from 1945 until his death in 1976, conducted a virulent campaign against Confucian thought, many in China now believe that Confucianism offers the most viable alternative to the nation's political status quo. In fact, the noncommunist "Little Dragons" of East Asia—Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea—would all attribute their economic success in the 1980s to their Confucian heritage.

IMPERIAL CHINA

At the same time that Rome rose to dominance in the West (see Chapter 6), a similar empire arose in China. But whereas Rome's empire derived from outward expansion, China's empire arose from consolidation at the center. From about the time of Confucius onward, seven states vied for control. They mobilized armies to battle one another; iron weapons replaced bronze; they organized bureaucracies and established legal systems; merchants gained political power; and a "hundred schools of thought" flowered.

The Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE): Organization and Control

This period of warring states culminated when the western state Qin [chin] (the origin of our name for China) conquered the other states and unified them under the Qin empire in 221 BCE. Under the leadership of Qin Shihuangdi [chin shuh-hwang-dee] (r. 221–210 BCE), who declared himself "First Emperor," the Qin worked very quickly to achieve a stable society. To discourage nomadic invaders from the north, they built a wall from the Yellow Sea east of modern Beijing far into Inner Mongolia, known today as the Great Wall of China (see Fig. 7.1).

The wall was constructed by soldiers, augmented by accused criminals, civil servants who found themselves in

disfavor, and conscripts from across the countryside. Each family was required to provide one able-bodied adult male to work on the wall each year. It was made of rammed earth, reinforced by continuous, horizontal courses of brushwood, and faced with stone. Watchtowers were built at high points, and military barracks were built in the valleys below. At the same time, the Chinese constructed nearly 4,350 miles of roads, linking even the furthest reaches of the country to the Central Plain. By the end of the second century CE, China had some 22,000 miles of roads serving a country of nearly 1.5 million square miles.

Such massive undertakings could only have been accomplished by an administrative bureaucracy of extraordinary organizational skill. Indeed, in the 15 years that the Qin ruled China, the written language was standardized, a uniform coinage was introduced, all wagon axles were required to be the same width so that they would uniformly fit in the existing ruts on the Chinese roads (thus accommodating trade and travel), a system of weights and measures was introduced, and the country was divided into the administrative and bureaucratic provinces much as they exist to the present day.

Perhaps nothing tells us more about Qin organization and control than the tomb of its first emperor, Qin Shihuangdi (see *Closer Look*, pages 222–223). When he died, battalions of life-size earthenware guards in military formation were buried in pits beside his tomb. (More than 8,000 have been excavated so far.) Like the Great Wall, this monumental undertaking required an enormous workforce, and we know that the Qin enlisted huge numbers of workers in this and its other projects.

The Philosophy of Han Feizi To maintain control, in fact, the Qin suppressed free speech, persecuted scholars, burned classical texts, and otherwise exerted absolute power. They based their thinking on the writings of Han Feizi [hahn-fay-dzuh], who had died in 233 BCE, just before the Qin took power. Orthodox Confucianism had been codified by Meng-zi [mung-dzuh], known as Mencius [men-shus] (ca. 370–300 BCE), an itinerant philosopher and sage who argued for the innate goodness of the individual. He believed that bad character was a result of society's inability to provide a positive, cultivating atmosphere in which individuals might realize their capacity for goodness. Han Feizi, on the other hand, argued that human beings were inherently evil and innately selfish (exactly the opposite of Mencius's point of view). Legalism, as Han Feizi's philosophy came to be called, required that the state exercise its power over the individual, because no agency other than the state could instill enough fear in the individual to elicit proper conduct. The Qin Legalist bureaucracy, coupled with an oppressive tax structure imposed to pay for their massive civil projects, soon led to rebellion, and after only 15 years in power, the Qin collapsed.