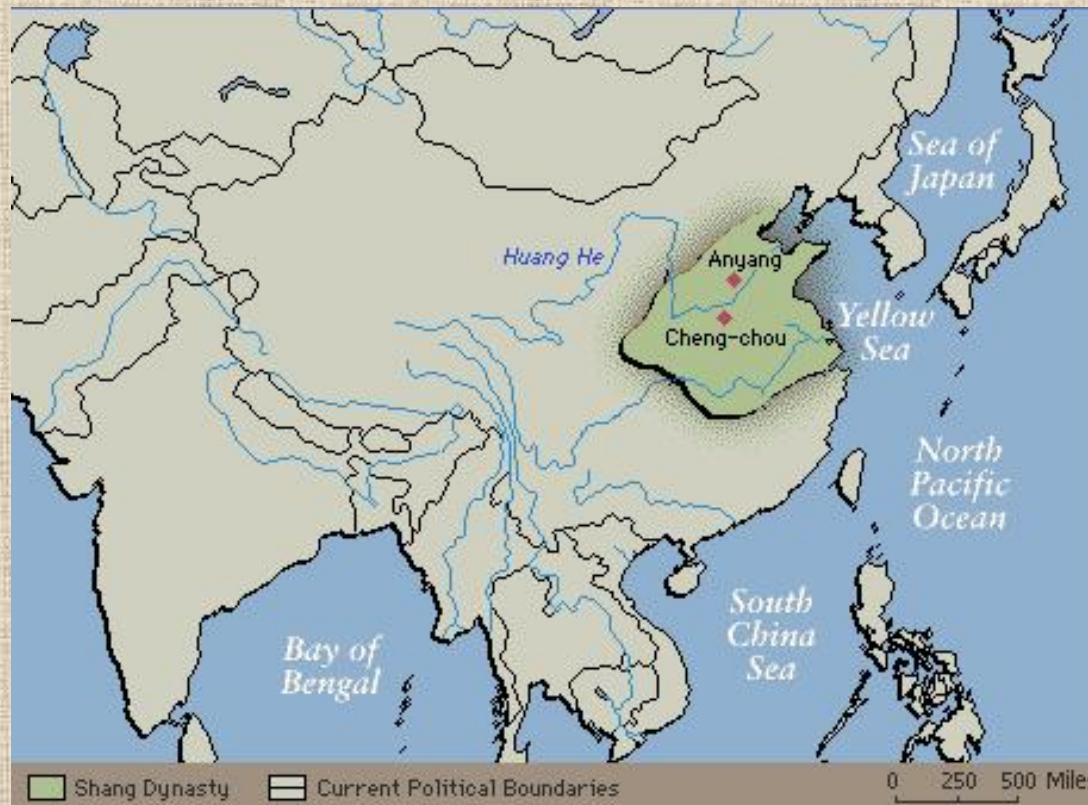


Imperial China

REORGANIZING HUMAN SOCIETIES (600 B.C.E. – 600 C.E.)



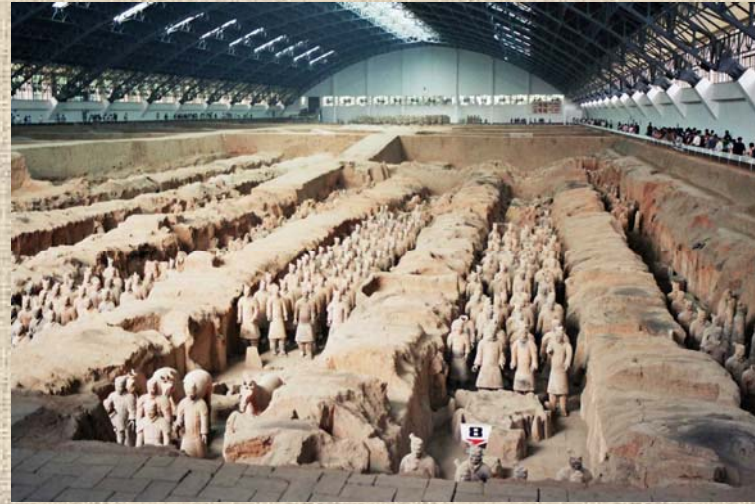
- Early China was fragmented, and the Shang & Zhou dynasties ruled for the most part a compact area of northeastern China.



- Rivalry and fighting took place between small Chinese states toward the end of the Zhou dynasty (i.e. **Warring States Period**).
- The Qin state conquered its rivals and created China's first empire (221 – 206 B.C.E.).



- The founder of the Qin, Shi Huangdi claimed his dynasty would last 10,000 generations – *it only lasted 15 years*



- The emperor used legalist tactics to control the country and even attacked Confucianism (i.e. burned books) as a means of eliminating any opposing philosophies to his rule.
- Despite its short existence, the Qin . . .
 - began construction on the Great Wall
 - imposed standard weights and measures
 - a single coinage
 - abolished slavery (or at least attempted to)



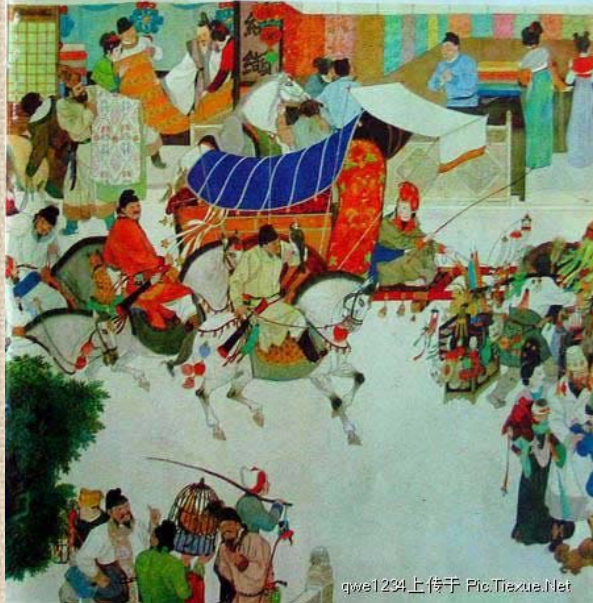
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXKZicmlwiM>

- Following the Qin was the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.), this began the long history of imperial China and the tradition of political and cultural unity and continuity that lasted into the early 20th century.





- The first ruler of the Han was Liu Bang (aka Gaozu).
- Gaozu and those who ruled after him (such as Emperor Wudi) courted popularity by denouncing the harsh rule of the Qin that came before them, but in reality they also maintained some legalists policies.
- Although China was a male dominated society, empresses did play a key role in the selection of which of the emperor's sons would succeed him to the throne.



- At first the empire was centered in the west at Chang'an, then it moved further east (*similar to Rome?*).
 - Chang'an was a bustling city filled with soldiers, merchants, and craftsmen. Marketplaces were scattered along with administrative offices that dotted broad thoroughfares.
- Urban areas existed, but like Rome a majority of citizens still resided in the outlying countryside.

- The elite of the city wore fine silks, traveled in horse-drawn carriages, and had time to devote to art, literature, animal fights, and banquets.
- Commoners inhabited alleys and lived in “packed” dwellings.



- The Han levied a tax on the annual harvest, which funded government activities (luxurious lifestyle of the royal court & daily tasks of administering the empire). *“Like the Romans, the Chinese government depended on a large population of free peasants to contribute taxes and services to the state.”*
- The need to transport southern crops to northern urban areas brought about the construction of several canals connecting major rivers.



- Census reports of the time approximate the population around 60 million people.
- A majority of the people lived in the eastern portion of the country where agriculture was available.



What about religion?

- The Chinese worshipped and tried to appease the forces of nature. They believed that supernatural forces flowed through the landscape. (From this comes feng shui, the notion that favorable locations exist for buildings and objects).
- As Han territory expanded, their culture also spread. For example, the belief that ancestors maintained an ongoing interest in the lives of living family members (cult of ancestry).



- The Han put a large emphasis on Confucianism, and it was Confucianism that served as the model for Chinese life.
- Each person had a place and responsibilities within the family hierarchy. This carried over into society as a whole – peasants, soldiers, and rulers all carried out their role for the welfare of Han society.





- Instead of giving influence to Chinese aristocrats, the Han emperor gave power to the gentry (a class below Chinese aristocrats) to serve as local officials. These officials were well respected and more responsive to problems in the land.
- In theory, any Chinese man could rise the ranks of civil service, but in reality children of the gentry had an advantage. Nonetheless, a merit system was put in place (i.e. civil service exams).

- Whereas the Romans of the time were using iron, the Chinese found a way to produce steel.
- They also found ways to use a watermill, a more effective horse collar, and invented paper long before the Europeans would.



- The use of steel & cast-iron weapons, the crossbow, and cavalry helped the Chinese expand their territory.
- The Silk Road was established and carried a variety of items across the continent (merchants along the way serving as middle men would increase the price of silk to make a profit).



- However, similar to the Romans the Han had created an empire that was too large to completely protect.
- Eventually, continuous attacks on the frontier burdened Han finances and the overall economy.
- Combined with official corruption, peasant uprisings, and the ambition of rural warlords the Han Dynasty fell in 220.

