



CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Early China, 2000–221 B.C.E.
- Nubia, 3100 B.C.E.–350 C.E.
- Celtic Europe, 1000–50 B.C.E.
- First Civilizations of the Americas: The Olmec and Chavín, 1200–250 B.C.E.
- Conclusion

ENVIRONMENT + TECHNOLOGY *Divination in Ancient Societies*

DIVERSITY + DOMINANCE *Human Nature and Good Government in the Analects of Confucius and the Legalist Writings of Han Fei*



Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

Wall Painting of Nubians Arriving in Egypt with Rings and Bags of Gold, Fourteenth Century B.C.E. This image decorated the tomb of an Egyptian administrator in Nubia.



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New Civilizations in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, 2200–250 B.C.E.

Around 2200 B.C.E. an Egyptian official named Harkhuf (HAHR-koof) set out from Aswan (AS-wahn), on the southern boundary of Egypt, for a place called Yam, far to the south in the land that later came to be called Nubia. He brought gifts from the Egyptian pharaoh for the ruler of Yam, and he returned home with three hundred donkeys loaded with incense, ebony, ivory, and other exotic products from tropical Africa. Despite the diplomatic fiction of exchanging gifts, we should probably regard Harkhuf as a brave and enterprising merchant. He returned with something so special that the eight-year-old boy pharaoh, Pepi II, could not contain his excitement. He wrote:

Come north to the residence at once! Hurry and bring with you this pygmy whom you brought from the land of the horizon-dwellers live, hale, and healthy, for the dances of the god, to gladden the heart, to delight the heart of king Neferkare [Pepi] who lives forever! When he goes down with you into the ship, get worthy men to be around him on deck, lest he fall into the water! When he lies down at night, get worthy men to lie around him in his tent. Inspect ten times at night! My majesty desires to see this pygmy more than the gifts of the mine-land and of Punt!

Scholars identify Yam with Kerma, later the capital of the kingdom of Nubia, on the upper Nile in modern Sudan. For Egyptians, Nubia was a wild and dangerous place. Yet it was developing a more complex political organization, and this illustration demonstrates how vibrant the commerce and cultural interaction between Nubia and Egypt would later become.

The complex societies examined in this chapter emerged later than those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley and in more varied ecological conditions, sometimes independently, sometimes under the influence of older centers. Whereas the older river-valley civilizations were largely self-sufficient, most of the new civilizations discussed in this chapter and the next were shaped by networks of long-distance trade.

In the second millennium B.C.E. a civilization based on irrigation agriculture arose in the valley of the Yellow River and its tributaries in northern China. In the same epoch, in Nubia (southern Egypt and northern Sudan), the first complex society in tropical Africa continued to develop from the roots observed earlier by Harkhuf. The first millennium B.C.E. witnessed the spread of Celtic peoples across

- How did early Chinese rulers use religion to justify and strengthen their power?
- How did the technological and cultural influences of Egypt affect the formation of Nubia?
- What were the causes behind the spread of Celtic peoples across much of continental Europe, and the later retreat of Celtic cultures to the western edge of the continent?
- What role did interaction between humans and the environment play in the development of early civilizations in the Americas?

much of continental Europe, as well as the flourishing of the earliest complex societies of the Western Hemisphere, the Olmec of Mesoamerica and the Chavín culture on the flanks of the Andes Mountains in South America. These societies had no contact with one another, and they represent a variety of responses to different environmental and historical circumstances. However, they have certain features in common and collectively point to a distinct stage in the development of human societies.

EARLY CHINA, 2000–221 B.C.E.



AP* Exam Tip Be prepared to compare at least two of the early civilizations discussed in Chapters 1 and 2: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, Shang, Olmec, and Chavín.

On the eastern edge of the vast Eurasian landmass, Neolithic cultures developed as early as 8000 B.C.E. A more complex civilization evolved in the second and first millennia B.C.E. Under the Shang and Zhou dynasties, many of the elements of classical Chinese civilization emerged and spread across East Asia. As in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley, the rise of cities, specialization of labor, bureaucratic government, writing, and other advanced technologies depended on the exploitation of a great river system—the Yellow River (Huang He [hwahng-HUH]) and its tributaries—to support intensive agriculture.

Geography and Resources

China is isolated by formidable natural barriers: the Himalaya (him-uh-LAY-uh) mountain range on the southwest; the Pamir (pah-MEER) and Tian Mountains and the Takla Makan (TAH-kluh muh-KAHN) Desert on the west; and the Gobi (GO-bee) Desert and the treeless, grassy hills and plains of the Mongolian steppe to the northwest and north (see Map 2.1). To the east lies the Pacific Ocean. Although China's separation was not total—trade goods, people, and ideas moved back and forth between China, India, and Central Asia—in many respects its development was distinctive.

Most of East Asia is covered with mountains, making overland travel and transport difficult. The great river systems of eastern China, however—the Yellow and the Yangzi (yang-zuh) Rivers and their tributaries—facilitate east-west movement. In the eastern river valleys dense populations practiced intensive agriculture; on the steppe lands of Mongolia, the deserts and oases of Xinjiang (shin-jyahng), and the high plateau of Tibet sparser populations lived largely by herding. The climate zones of East Asia range from the dry, subarctic reaches of Manchuria in the north to the lush, subtropical forests of the south, and a rich variety of plant and animal life are adapted to these zones.

Within the eastern agricultural zone, the north and the south have quite different environments. Each region developed distinctive patterns for land use, the kinds of crops grown, and the organization of agricultural labor. The monsoons that affect India and Southeast Asia (see Chapter 1) drench southern China with heavy rainfall in the summer, the most beneficial time for agriculture. In northern China rainfall is much more erratic. As in Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley, Chinese civilization developed in relatively adverse conditions on the northern plains, a demanding environment that stimulated important technologies and political traditions as well as the philosophical and religious views that became hallmarks of Chinese civilization. By the third century C.E., however, the gradual flow of population toward the warmer southern lands caused the political and intellectual center to move south.

The eastern river valleys and North China Plain contained timber, stone, scattered deposits of metals, and, above all, potentially productive land. Winds blowing from Central Asia deposit a yellowish-brown dust called **loess** (less) (these particles suspended in the water give the Yellow River its distinctive hue and name). Over the ages a thick mantle of soil has accumulated that is extremely fertile and soft enough to be worked with wooden digging sticks.

In this landscape, agriculture required the coordinated efforts of large numbers of people. Forests had to be cleared. Earthen dikes were constructed to protect nearby fields from recurrent floods on the Yellow River. To cope with the periodic droughts, reservoirs were dug to store river water and rainfall. Retaining walls partitioned the hillsides into flat arable terraces.

The staple crops in the northern region were millet, a grain indigenous to China, and wheat, which had spread to East Asia from the Middle East. Rice, which requires a warmer climate,

The East Asian Environment

loess A fine, light silt deposited by wind and water. It constitutes the fertile soil of the Yellow River Valley in northern China.

Intensive Agriculture

CHRONOLOGY

	China	Nubia	Celtic Europe	Americas
	8000–2000 B.C.E. Neolithic cultures	4500 B.C.E. Early agriculture in Nubia		3500 B.C.E. Early agriculture in Mesoamerica and Andes
2500 B.C.E.				2600 B.C.E. Rise of Caral
2000 B.C.E.	2000 B.C.E. Bronze metallurgy	2200 B.C.E. Harkhuf's expeditions to Yam		
	1750–1045 B.C.E. Shang dynasty	1750 B.C.E. Rise of kingdom of Kush based on Kerma		
1500 B.C.E.		1500 B.C.E. Egyptian conquest of Nubia		1200–900 B.C.E. Rise of Olmec civilization, centered on San Lorenzo
1000 B.C.E.	1045–221 B.C.E. Zhou dynasty	1000 B.C.E. Decline of Egyptian control in Nubia	1000 B.C.E. Origin of Celtic culture in Central Europe	900–600 B.C.E. La Venta, the dominant Olmec center
		750 B.C.E. Rise of kingdom based on Napata		900–250 B.C.E. Chavín civilization in the Andes
	600 B.C.E. Iron metallurgy	712–660 B.C.E. Nubian kings rule Egypt		600–400 B.C.E. Ascendancy of Tres Zapotes and Olmec decline
500 B.C.E.			500 B.C.E. Celtic elites trade for Mediterranean goods	500 B.C.E. Early metallurgy in Andes
	551–479 B.C.E. Life of Confucius		500–300 B.C.E. Migrations across Europe	
	356–338 B.C.E. Lord Shang brings Legalist reforms to Qin state		390 B.C.E. Celts sack Rome	
		300 B.C.E.–350 C.E. Kingdom of Meroë		



AP* Exam Tip The impact of agriculture on the local environment is an important point to understand.

prospered in the Yangzi River Valley. The cultivation of rice required a great outlay of labor. Rice paddies—the fields where rice is grown—must be flat and surrounded by water channels to bring and lead away water according to a precise schedule. Seedlings sprout in a nursery and are transplanted to the paddy, which is then flooded. Flooding eliminates weeds and rival plants and supports microscopic organisms that keep the soil fertile. When the crop is ripe, the paddy is drained; the rice stalks are harvested with a sickle; and the edible kernels are separated out. The reward for this effort is a harvest that can feed more people per cultivated acre than any other grain, which explains why the south eventually became more populous than the north.

The Shang Period, 1750–1045 B.C.E.

Early Societies

Archaeological evidence shows that the Neolithic population of China grew millet, raised pigs and chickens, and used stone tools. They made pottery on a wheel and fired it in high-temperature kilns. They pioneered the production of silk cloth, first raising silkworms on the leaves of mulberry trees, then carefully unraveling their cocoons to produce silk thread. They built walls of pounded earth by hammering the soil inside temporary wooden frames until it

Shang The dominant people in the earliest Chinese dynasty for which we have written records (ca. 1750–1045 B.C.E.).

Oracle Bones and Shang Religion

became hard as cement. By 2000 B.C.E. they had begun to make bronze (a thousand years after the beginnings of bronze-working in the Middle East).

In later times legends depicted the early rulers of China as ideal and benevolent masters in a tranquil Golden Age. They were followed by the first dynasty, called Xia (*shah*), who were in turn succeeded by the **Shang** (*shahng*) dynasty. Since scholars are uncertain about the historical reality of the Xia, Chinese history really begins with the rise of the Shang.

Little is known about how the Shang rose to dominance ca. 1750 B.C.E., since written documents only appear toward the end of Shang rule. These documents are the so-called oracle bones, the shoulder bones of cattle and the bottom shells of turtles employed by Shang rulers to obtain information from ancestral spirits and gods (see Environment and Technology: Divination in Ancient Societies). The writing on the oracle bones concerns the king, his court, and religious practices, with little about other aspects of Shang society. The same limitations apply to the archaeological record, primarily treasure-filled tombs of the Shang ruling class.

The earliest known oracle bone inscriptions date to the thirteenth century B.C.E., but the system was already so sophisticated that some scholars believe writing in China could be considerably older. In the Shang writing system the several hundred characters (written symbols) were originally pictures of objects that become simplified over time, with each character representing a one-syllable word for an object or idea. It is likely that only a small number of people at court used this system. Nevertheless, the Shang writing system is the ancestor of the system still used in China and elsewhere in East Asia today. Later Chinese writing developed thousands of more complex characters that provide information about both the meaning of the word and its sound.

Scholars have reconstructed the major features of Shang religion from the oracle bones. The supreme god, Di (*dee*), who resides in the sky and unleashes the power of storms, is felt to be

distant and unconcerned with the fate of humans, and cannot be approached directly. When people die, their spirits survive in the same supernatural sphere as Di and other gods of nature. These ancestral spirits, organized in a heavenly hierarchy that mirrors the social hierarchy on earth, can intervene in human affairs. The Shang ruler has direct access to his more recent ancestors, who have access to earlier generations, who can, in turn, intercede with Di. Thus the ruler is the crucial link between Heaven and earth, using his unrivaled access to higher powers to promote agricultural productivity and protect his people from natural disasters. This belief, which persisted throughout Chinese history, has been an extremely effective rationale for authoritarian rule.

The king was often on the road, traveling to the courts of his subordinates to reinforce their loyalty, but it is uncertain how much territory in the North China Plain was effectively controlled by the Shang. Excavations at sites elsewhere in China show artistic and technological traditions so different that they are probably the products of independent groups. Both the lack of writing elsewhere in early China



Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, USA/
Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop/The Bridgeman Art Library

Shang Period Bronze Vessel Vessels such as this large wine jar were used in rituals by the Shang ruling class to make contact with their ancestors. As both the source and the proof of the elite's authority, these vessels were often buried in Shang tombs. The complex shapes and elaborate decorations testify to the artisans' skill.

King and Elite



AP* Exam Tip The political structure of each early civilization is an important comparison point to understand.

and the Han-era conception that China had always been unified obscure from us the probable ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of early China.

The Shang elite were a warrior class reveling in warfare, hunting, exchanging gifts, feasting, and drinking. They fought with bronze weapons and rode into battle on horse-drawn chariots, a technology that originated in western Asia. Frequent military campaigns provided these warriors with a theater for brave achievements and yielded considerable plunder. Many prisoners of war were taken in these campaigns and made into slaves and sacrificial victims.

Excavated tombs of Shang royal and elite families, primarily from the vicinity of Anyang (ahn-yahng) (see Map 2.1), contain large quantities of valuable objects made of metal, jade, bone, ivory, shell, and stone, including musical instruments, jewelry, mirrors, weapons, and bronze vessels. These vessels, intricately decorated with stylized depictions of real and imaginary animals, were used to make offerings to ancestral spirits. Possession of bronze objects was a sign of status and authority. The tombs also contain the bodies of family members, servants, and prisoners of war who were killed at the time of the burial. It appears that the objects and people were intended to serve the main occupant of the tomb in the afterlife.

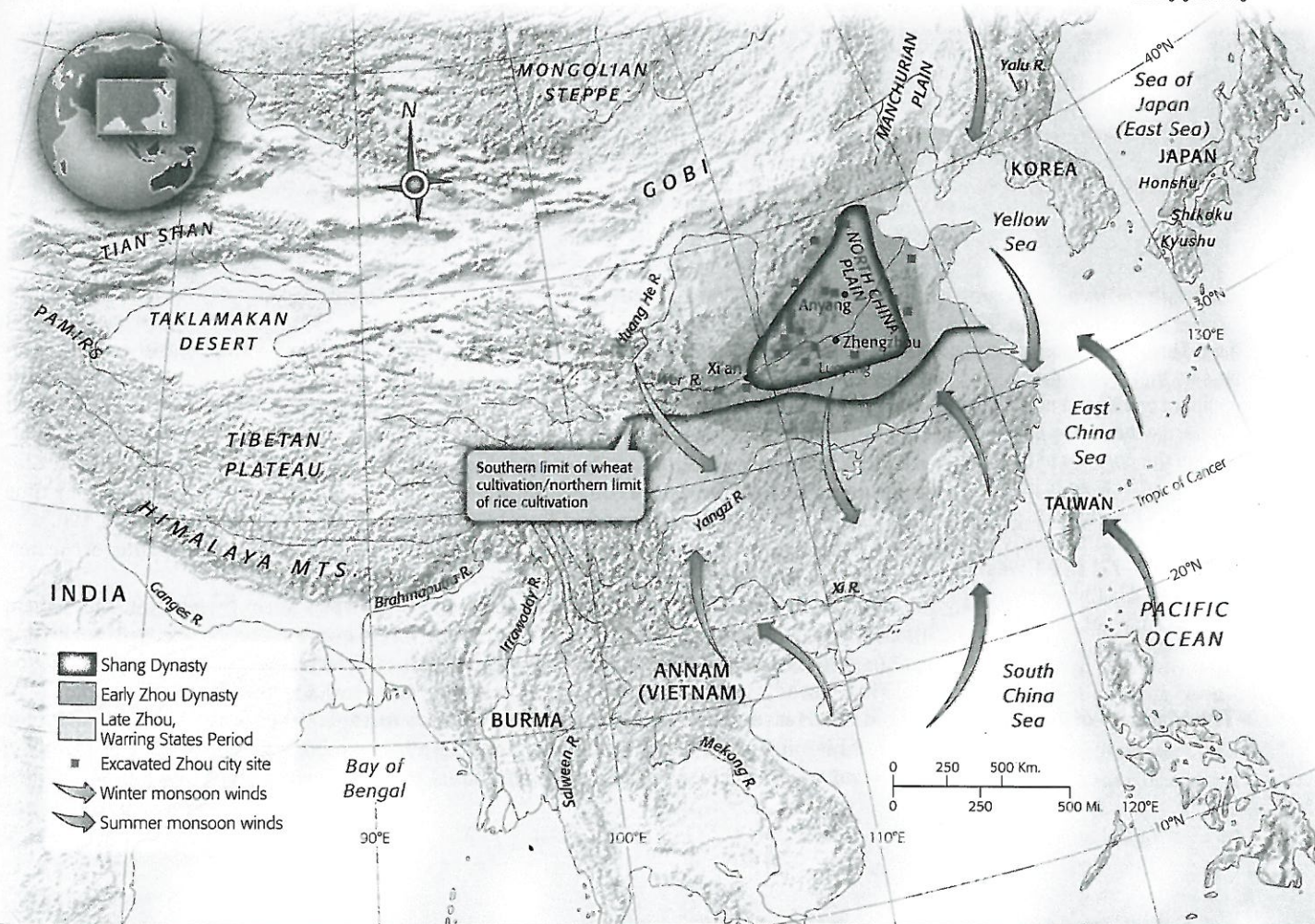
Shang cities are not well preserved in the archaeological record, partly because of the climate of northern China and partly because of the building materials used. With stone in short supply, cities were protected by massive walls of pounded earth, and buildings were constructed with wooden posts and dried mud. A number of sites appear to have served at different times as centers of political control and religion, with palaces, administrative buildings and storehouses, royal tombs, shrines of gods and ancestors, and houses of the nobility. The common people lived in agricultural villages outside these centers.

Cities

 Interactive Map

MAP 2.1 China in the Shang and Zhou Periods, 1750–221 B.C.E. The Shang dynasty arose in the second millennium B.C.E. in the floodplain of the Yellow River. While southern China benefits from the monsoon rains, northern China depends on irrigation. As population increased, the Han Chinese migrated from their eastern homeland to other parts of China, carrying with them their technologies and cultural practices. Other ethnic groups predominated in more outlying regions, and the nomadic peoples of the northwest constantly challenged Chinese authority.

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Divination in Ancient Societies

Many ancient peoples believed that the gods controlled the forces of nature and shaped destinies. Starting from this premise, they practiced various techniques of divination—the interpretation of phenomena in the natural world as signs of the gods' will and intentions. Through divination the ancients sought to communicate with the gods and thereby anticipate—even influence—the future.

The Shang ruling class in China frequently sought information from ancestors and other higher powers. The Shang monarch himself, with the help of religious experts, often functioned as the intermediary, since he had access to his own ancestors, who had a high ranking in the hierarchy of the spirit world. Chief among the tools of divination were oracle bones. Holes were first drilled in the shoulder bone of an ox or the bottom shell of a turtle to weaken it, and a red-hot pointed stick was applied, causing the bone or shell to crack. The cracks were then “read” by skilled interpreters as answers, on the part of the ancestor who was being consulted, to whatever questions had been asked. The questions, answers, and, often, confirmation of the accuracy of the prediction were subsequently incised on the shell or bone, providing a permanent record of matters of importance to the ruler, such as imminent weather, the yield of the upcoming harvest, the health of the king and his family, the proper performance of rituals, the prospects of military campaigns and hunting expeditions, and the mood of powerful royal ancestors and other divine forces. Tens of thousands of oracle bones survive as a major source of information about Shang life.

In Mesopotamia in the third and second millennia B.C.E. the most important type of divination involved close inspection of the form, size, and markings of the organs of sacrificed animals. Archaeologists have found models of sheep's livers

labeled with explanations of the meaning of various features. Two other techniques of divination were following the trail of smoke from burning incense and examining the patterns that resulted when oil was thrown on water.

From about 2000 B.C.E. Mesopotamian diviners also foretold the future from their observation of the movements of the sun, moon, planets, stars, and constellations. In the centuries after 1000 B.C.E. celestial omens were the most important source of predictions about the future, and specialists maintained precise records of astronomical events. Mesopotamian mathematics, essential for calculations of the movements of celestial bodies, was the most sophisticated in the ancient Middle East. Astrology, with its division of the sky into the twelve segments of the zodiac and its use of the position of the stars and planets to predict an individual's destiny, developed out of long-standing Mesopotamian attention to the movements of celestial objects. Horoscopes—charts with calculations and predictions based on an individual's date of birth—have been found from shortly before 400 B.C.E.

Greeks and Romans frequently used divination before making decisions. Most famous among the many oracle sites in Greece was Delphi, in a stunning location overlooking the Gulf of Corinth, where advice was sought from the god Apollo. A private individual or the official envoy from a Greek community, after leaving the customary gift for the god and entering the temple, had his question conveyed to the priestess, who fell into a trance (recent geological studies have discovered that the temple lay directly above a fissure, and scholars speculate that a gas rising up into the chamber may have put the priestess into an intoxicated state) and delivered a wild utterance that was then “translated” and written down by the priests who administered the shrine. Information and advice from

The Zhou Period, 1045–221 B.C.E.

Zhou The people and dynasty that took over the dominant position in north China from the Shang and created the concept of the Mandate of Heaven to justify their rule. The Zhou era, particularly the vigorous early period (1045–771 B.C.E.), was remembered in Chinese tradition as a time of prosperity and benevolent rule.

The Mandate of Heaven

In the mid-eleventh century B.C.E. the Shang were overthrown by the **Zhou** (joe), whose homeland lay several hundred miles to the west, in the valley of the Wei (way) River. While the ethnic origin of the Zhou is unclear (their traditions acknowledged that their ancestors had lived for generations among the western “barbarians”), they took over many elements of Shang culture. The Zhou line of kings was the longest lasting and most revered of all dynasties in Chinese history. The two founders were Wen, a vassal ruler who, after being held prisoner for a time by his Shang overlord, initiated a rebellion of disaffected Shang subjects; and his son, Wu, who mounted a successful attack on the Shang capital and was enthroned as the first ruler of the new dynasty.

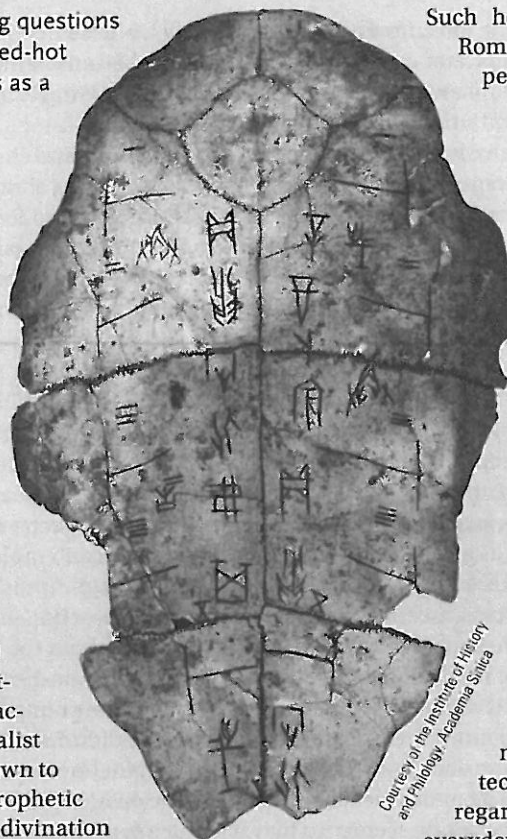
Wu justified his achievement in a manner that became the norm throughout subsequent Chinese history. Claiming that the last Shang ruler was depraved and tyrannical, neglecting to honor gods and ancestors and killing and abusing his subjects, he invoked the highest Zhou deity, Tian (tyehn) (“Heaven”), who was more compassionate than the aloof Di of the Shang. Wu declared that Heaven granted authority and legitimacy to a ruler as long as he looked out for the welfare of his subjects; the monarch, accordingly, was called the “Son of Heaven.” The proof of divine favor was the prosperity and stability of the kingdom. But if the ruler persistently failed

Chinese Divination Shell After inscribing questions on a bone or shell, the diviner applied a red-hot point and interpreted the resulting cracks as a divine response.

the god at Delphi helped Greek communities choose where to place new settlements during the centuries of colonization throughout the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and Delphic priests may have collected information from the many travelers who came their way and then dispensed it by means of oracles.

Greek and Roman sources report on practices of divination among the Celts. Predicting the future is one of the many religious functions attributed to the Druids, as well as to a specialized group of "seers." Among their methods were careful observation of the flight patterns of birds and of the appearance of sacrificial offerings. In Ireland a ritual specialist ate the meat of a freshly killed bull, lay down to sleep on the bull's hide, and then had prophetic dreams. The most startling form of Celtic divination is described by the geographer Strabo:

The Romans put a stop to [the] customs . . . connected with sacrifice and divination, as they were in conflict with our own ways: for example, they would strike a man who had been consecrated for sacrifice in the back with a sword, and make prophecies based on his death-spasms.



Courtesy of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica

Such horrifying reports were used by the Romans to justify the conquest of Celtic peoples in order to "civilize" them.

Little is known about the divinatory practices of early American peoples. The Olmec produced polished stone mirrors whose concave surfaces gave off reflected images that were thought to emanate from a supernatural realm. Painted basins found in Olmec households have been compared to those attested for later Mesoamerican groups. In the latter, women threw maize kernels onto the surface of water-filled basins and noted the patterns by which they floated or sank. By this means they ascertained information useful to the family, such as the cause and cure of illness, the right time for agricultural tasks or marriage, and favorable names for newborn children.

It may seem surprising that divination is being treated here as a form of technology. Most modern people would regard such interpretations of patterns in everyday phenomena as mere superstition.

However, for ancient peoples who believed that the gods directly controlled events in the natural world, divination amounted to the application of these principles of causation to the socially beneficial task of acquiring information about the future. These techniques were usually known only to a class of experts whose special training and knowledge gave them high status in their society.

Mandate of Heaven Chinese religious and political ideology developed by the Zhou, according to which it was the prerogative of Heaven, the chief deity, to grant power to the ruler of China and to take away that power if the ruler failed to conduct himself justly and in the best interests of his subjects.

Zhou Government

P PRIMARY SOURCE: The *Book of Documents*

Read this Confucian classic to discover how rulers gain or lose the right to rule, an authority known as the Mandate of Heaven.

in these duties and neglected the warning signs of flood, famine, invasion, or other disasters, Heaven could withdraw this "Mandate" and transfer it to another, more worthy ruler and family. This theory of the **Mandate of Heaven**, which validated the institution of monarchy by connecting the religious and political spheres, served as the foundation of Chinese political thought for three thousand years.

Much more is known about the early centuries of Zhou rule (the Western Zhou Period, 1045–771 B.C.E.) than the preceding Shang era because of the survival of written texts, above all the *Book of Documents*, a collection of decrees, letters, and other historical records, and the *Book of Songs*, an anthology of 305 poems, ballads, and folksongs that illuminate the lives of rulers, nobles, and peasants. Additionally, members of the Zhou elite recorded their careers and cited honors received from the rulers in bronze inscriptions.

To consolidate his power, King Wu distributed territories to his relatives and allies, which they were to administer and profit from so long as they remained loyal to him. These regional rulers then apportioned pieces of their holdings to their supporters, creating a pyramidal structure of political, social, and economic relations often referred to as "feudal," borrowing terminology from the European Middle Ages.

When Wu died, his son and heir, Cheng (chung), was too young to assume full powers, and for a time the kingdom was run by his uncles, especially the Duke of Zhou. The Duke of Zhou is

one of the most famous figures in early Chinese history, in large part because the philosopher Confucius later celebrated him as the ideal administrator who selflessly served as regent for his young nephew at a delicate time for the new dynasty, then dutifully returned power as soon as the lawful ruler came of age.

The early Zhou rulers constructed a new capital city in their homeland (near modern Xi'an), and other urban centers developed in succeeding centuries. Cities were laid out on a grid plan aligned with the north polar star, with gates in the fortification walls opening to the cardinal directions and major buildings facing south. This was in keeping with an already ancient concern, known as *feng shui* (fung shway) ("wind and water"), to orient structures so that they would be in a harmonious relationship with the terrain, the forces of wind, water, and sunlight, and the invisible energy perceived to be flowing through the natural world.

Religion and Daily Life

Alongside the new primacy of the Zhou deity Tian and continuation of religious practices inherited from the Shang era, new forms of divination developed. One increasingly popular method involved throwing down a handful of long and short stalks of the milfoil or yarrow plant and interpreting the patterns they formed. Over time a multilayered text was compiled, called the *Book of Changes*, that explained in detail the meanings of each of the sixty-four standard patterns formed by the stalks. In later ages this practice and the accompanying text also came to be used as a vehicle for self-examination and contemplation of the workings of the world.

The *Book of Songs* provides extraordinary glimpses into the lives, activities, and feelings of a diverse cross-section of early Chinese people—elite and common, male and female, urban and rural. We can glean much from these poems about the situation of women in early China. Some describe men and women choosing each other and engaging in sex outside of marriage. Other poems tell of arranged marriages in which the young woman anxiously leaves home and birth family behind and journeys to the household of an unknown husband and new family. One poem describes the different ways that infant boys and girls were welcomed into an aristocratic family. The male was received like a little prince: placed on a bed, swaddled in expensive robes, and given a jade scepter to play with as a symbol of his future authority; the female was placed on the floor and given the weight from a weaving loom to indicate her future obligations of subservience and household labor.

Fragmentation and Rivalry

Over the period from the eleventh to eighth centuries B.C.E. the power of the Zhou monarch gradually eroded, largely because of the feudal division of territory and power. In 771 B.C.E. the Zhou capital was attacked by a coalition of enemies, and the dynasty withdrew to a base farther east, at Luoyang (LWOE-yahng). This change ushers in the Eastern Zhou Period (771–221 B.C.E.), a long era in which the Zhou monarchs remained as figureheads, given only nominal allegiance by the rulers of many virtually independent states scattered across northern and central China.

The first part of the Eastern Zhou era is called the Spring and Autumn Period (771–481 B.C.E.) because of the survival of a text, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, that provides a spare historical record of events in the small eastern state of Lu. Later writers added commentaries that fleshed out this skeletal record. The states of this era were frequently at odds with one another and employed various tactics to protect themselves and advance their interests, including diplomatic initiatives, shifting alliances, and coups and assassinations as well as conventional warfare. The overall trend was gradual consolidation into a smaller number of larger and more powerful kingdoms.

Warfare was a persistent feature of the period, and there were important transformations in the character and technology of war. In the Shang and early Zhou periods, warfare largely had been conducted by members of the elite, who rode in chariots, treated battle as an opportunity for displays of skill and courage, and adhered to a code of heroic conduct. But in the high-stakes conflicts of the Eastern Zhou era, there was a shift to much larger armies made up of conscripted farmers who fought bloody battles, unconstrained by noble etiquette, in which large numbers were slaughtered. Some men undertook the study of war and composed handbooks, such as Sunzi's *Art of War*. Sunzi (soon-zuh) approaches war as a chess game in which the successful general employs deception, intuitively the energy potential inherent in the landscape, and psychologically manipulates both friend and foe. The best victories are achieved without fighting so that one can incorporate the unimpaired resources of the other side.

Technological advances also impacted warfare. In the last centuries of the Zhou, the Chinese learned from the nomadic peoples of the northern steppes to put fighters on horseback. By 600 B.C.E. iron began to replace bronze as the primary metal for tools and weapons. There is mounting evidence that ironworking also came to China from the nomadic peoples of the

northwest. Metalworkers in China were the first in the world to forge steel by removing carbon during the iron-smelting process.

Another significant development was the increasing size and complexity of the governments that administered Chinese states. Rulers ordered the careful recording of the population, the land, and its agricultural products so that the government could compel peasants to donate labor for public works projects (digging and maintaining irrigation channels and building roads, defensive walls, and palaces), conscript them into the army, and collect taxes. Skilled officials supervised the expanding bureaucracies of scribes, accountants, and surveyors and advised the rulers on various matters. Thus there arose a class of educated and ambitious men who traveled from state to state offering their services to the rulers—and their theories of ideal government.



AP® Exam Tip Be prepared to identify and discuss the diffusion of the major religious systems of the classical civilizations.

Confucianism

Confucius Western name for the Chinese philosopher Kongzi (551–479 B.C.E.). His doctrine of duty and public service had a great influence on subsequent Chinese thought and served as a code of conduct for government officials.

Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Society

The Eastern Zhou era, despite being plagued by political fragmentation, frequent warfare, and anxious uncertainty, was also a time of great cultural development. The two most influential “philosophical” systems of Chinese civilization—Confucianism and Daoism—had their roots in this period, though they would be further developed and adapted to changing circumstances in later times.

Kongzi (kohng-zuh) (551–479 B.C.E.), known in the West by the Latin form of his name, **Confucius**, withdrew from public life after unsuccessful efforts to find employment as an official and adviser to a number of rulers of the day. He attracted a circle of students to whom he presented his wide-ranging ideas on morality, conduct, and government. His sayings were handed down orally by several generations of disciples before being compiled in written form as the *Analects* (see Diversity and Dominance: Human Nature and Good Government in the *Analects* of Confucius and the Legalist Writings of Han Fei). This work, along with a set of earlier texts that were believed (probably wrongly) to have been edited by Confucius—the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*—became the core texts of Confucianism.

Confucius drew upon traditional institutions and values but gave them new shape and meaning. He looked back to the early Zhou period as a Golden Age of wise rulers and benevolent government, models to which the people of his own “broken” society should return. He also placed great importance on the “rituals,” or forms of behavior, that guide people in their daily interactions with one another, since these promote harmony in human relations.

For Confucius the family was the fundamental component of society, and the ways in which family members regulated their conduct in the home prepared them to serve as citizens of the state. Each person had his or her place and duties in a hierarchical order that was determined by age and gender. The “filiality” of children to parents, which included obedience, reverence, and love, had its analogue in the devotion of subjects to the ruler. Another fundamental virtue for Confucius was *ren* (ruhn), sometimes translated as “humaneness,” which traditionally meant the feelings between family members and which was expanded into a universal ideal of benevolence and compassion that would, ideally, pervade every activity. Confucianism placed immense value on the practical task of making society function smoothly at every level. It provided a philosophical and ethical framework for conducting one’s life and understanding one’s place in the world. But it was not a religion. While Confucius urged respect for gods, ancestors, and religious traditions, he felt that such supernatural matters were unknowable.

Confucius’s ideas were little known in his own time, but his teachings were preserved and gradually spread to a wider audience. Some disciples took Confucianism in new directions. Mengzi (muhng-zuh) (known in the West as Mencius, 371–289 B.C.E.), who did much to popularize Confucian ideas in his age, believed in the essential goodness of all human beings and argued that, if people were shown the right way by virtuous leaders, they would voluntarily do the right thing. Xunzi (shoon-zuh) (ca. 310–210 B.C.E.), on the other hand, concluded that people had to be compelled to make appropriate choices. (This approach led to the development of a school of thought called Legalism, discussed later in this chapter.) As we shall see in Chapter 5, in the era of the emperors a revised Confucianism became the dominant political philosophy and the core of the educational system for government officials.

If Confucianism emphasized social engagement, its great rival, **Daoism** (DOW-ism), urged withdrawal from the empty formalities, rigid hierarchy, and distractions of Chinese society. Laozi (low-zuh) is regarded as the originator of Daoism, although virtually nothing is known

Daoism Chinese school of thought, originating in the Warring States Period with Laozi. Daoism offered an alternative to the Confucian emphasis on hierarchy and duty.



Daoism

yin/yang In Chinese belief, complementary factors that help to maintain the equilibrium of the world. Yang is associated with masculine, light, and active qualities; yin with feminine, dark, and passive qualities.

Male and Female Roles



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Maria Antoniette Evans Fund. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 31.976

about him, and some scholars doubt his existence. Laozi is credited with the foundational text of Daoism, the *Classic of the Way of Virtue*, a difficult book full of ambiguity and paradox, beautiful poetic images, and tantalizing hints of “truths” that cannot be adequately explained with words. It raises questions about whether the material world in which we operate is real or a kind of dream that blocks us from perceiving a higher reality. It argues that education, knowledge, and rational analysis are obstacles to understanding and that we would be better off cultivating our senses and trusting our intuitions. The primal world of the distant past was happy and blessed before civilization and “knowledge” corrupted it. The Daoist sage strives to lead a tranquil existence by retreating from the stresses and obligations of a chaotic society. He avoids useless struggles, making himself soft and malleable so that the forces that buffet people can flow harmlessly around him. He chooses not to “act” because such action almost always leads to a different outcome from the one desired, whereas inaction may bring the desired outcome. And he has no fear of death because, for all we know, death may be merely a transformation to another plane of existence. In the end, in a world that is always changing and lacks any absolute morality or meaning, all that matters is the individual’s fundamental understanding of, and accommodation to, the *Dao*, the “path” of nature.

Daoism, like Confucianism, would continue to evolve for many centuries, adapting to changes in Chinese society and incorporating many elements of traditional religion, mysticism, and magic. Although Daoism and Confucianism may appear to be thoroughly at odds regarding the relationship of the individual and the larger society, many Chinese through the ages have drawn on both traditions, and it has been said that the typical Chinese scholar-official was a Confucian in his work and public life but a Daoist in the privacy of his study.

The classical Chinese patterns of family and property took shape in the later Zhou period. The kinship structures of the Shang and early Zhou periods, based on the clan (a relatively large group of related families), gave way to the three-generation family of grandparents, parents, and children as the fundamental social unit. Fathers had absolute authority over women and children, arranged marriages for their offspring, and could sell the labor of family members. Only men could conduct rituals and make offerings to the ancestors, though women helped maintain the household’s ancestral shrines. A man was limited to one wife but was permitted additional sexual partners, who had the lower status of concubines. A man whose wife died had a duty to remarry in order to produce male heirs to keep alive the cult of the ancestors, whereas women were discouraged from remarrying.

In Chinese tradition the concept of **yin/yang** represented the complementary nature of male and female roles in the natural order. The male principle (yang) was equated with the sun: active, bright, and shining; the female principle (yin) corresponded to the moon: passive, shaded, and reflective. Male toughness was balanced by female gentleness, male action and initiative by female endurance and need for completion, and male leadership by female supportiveness. In its earliest form, the theory considered yin and yang as equal and alternately dominant, like day and night, creating balance in the world. However, as a result of the changing role of women in the Zhou period and the pervasive influence of Confucian ideology, the male principle came to be seen as superior to the female.

The Warring States Period, 481–221 B.C.E.

The second half of the Eastern Zhou era is conventionally called the Warring States Period (481–221 B.C.E.) because the scale and intensity of rivalry and warfare between the states accelerated. More successful states conquered and absorbed less capable rivals, and by the beginning of the third century B.C.E. only seven major states remained. Each state sought security by any and all means: building

Warring States Period Bronze Figurine The figurine of a youth, made of bronze, was produced in the Warring States Period, but the jade birds perched atop the staffs were originally carved in the Shang era. The youth has braided hair and is wearing boots and an elaborately decorated robe. The chain may indicate that these were live birds rather than images.

The Qin and Legalism

walls to protect its borders; putting into the field the largest possible armies; experimenting with military organization, tactics, and technology; and devising new techniques of administration to produce the greatest revenues. Some wars were fought against non-Chinese peoples living on the margins of the states' territories or even in enclaves within the states. In addition to self-defense, the aim of these campaigns was often to increase the territory available for agriculture, since cultivated land was, ultimately, the source of wealth and manpower. The conquered peoples assimilated over time, becoming Chinese in language and culture.

The most innovative of all the states of this era was Qin (chin), on the western edge of "the Central States" (the term used for the Chinese lands of north and central China). Coming from the same Wei River Valley frontier region as the Zhou long before, and exposed to barbarian influences and attacks, the Qin rulers commanded a nation of hardy farmers and employed them in large, well-trained armies. The very vulnerability of their circumstances may have inspired the Qin rulers of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. to take great risks, for they were the first to put into practice the philosophy and methods of the Legalist school of political theorists. In the mid-fourth century B.C.E. Lord Shang was put in charge of the Qin government. He maintained that the Confucians were mistaken in looking to an idealized past for solutions and naïve in thinking that the ruler should worry about his subjects' opinions. In Lord Shang's

view, the ruler should trust his own judgment and employ whatever means are necessary to compel obedience and good behavior in his subjects. In the end, Legalists were willing to sacrifice individual freedom to guarantee the security and prosperity of the state. To strengthen the ruler, Lord Shang moved to weaken the Qin nobility, sending out centrally appointed district governors, abolishing many of the privileges of the nobility, and breaking up large estates by requiring property to be divided equally among the surviving sons. Although he eventually became entangled in bitter intrigue at court and was killed in 338 B.C.E., the Qin rulers of the third century B.C.E. continued to employ Legalist advisers and pursue Legalist policies, and, as we shall see in Chapter 5, they converted the advantages gained from this approach into a position of unprecedented power.

SECTION REVIEW

- The challenges of engaging in agriculture in the varied environments of East Asia led to the formation of complex, hierarchical societies.
- The Shang and Zhou rulers of early China developed religious ideologies (oracle bone divination, Mandate of Heaven theories) that justified monarchic systems of government.
- The feudal organization of the Zhou state led, over time, to the weakening of the monarch's authority and the rise of many essentially independent states.
- The rivalry and conflict of Chinese states in the later Zhou era led to the rise of bureaucracies, administrative experts, and more deadly forms of warfare.
- This era also saw the rise and rivalry of major philosophical systems: Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.
- Although yin/yang theory regarded the male and female principles as interdependent, men were dominant in the family, and the influence of Confucianism led to a reduction in women's status and rights.

NUBIA, 3100 B.C.E.–350 C.E.

Since the first century B.C.E. the name *Nubia* has been applied to a thousand-mile (1,600-kilometer) stretch of the Nile Valley lying between Aswan and Khartoum (kahr-TOOM) and straddling the southern part of the modern nation of Egypt and the northern part of Sudan (see Map 2.2). Nubia is the only continuously inhabited territory connecting sub-Saharan Africa (the lands south of the Sahara Desert) with North Africa. For thousands of years it has served as a corridor for trade between tropical Africa and the Mediterranean. Nubia was richly endowed with natural resources such as gold, copper, and semiprecious stones.

Nubia's location and natural wealth, along with Egypt's hunger for Nubian gold, explain the early rise of a civilization with a complex political organization, social stratification, metallurgy, monumental building, and writing. Scholars have moved away from the traditional view that Nubian civilization simply imitated Egypt, and they now emphasize the mutually beneficial interactions between Egypt and Nubia and the growing evidence that Nubian culture also drew on influences from sub-Saharan Africa.