

# The Unification of China

## MAIN IDEA

**RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS** The social disorder of the warring states contributed to the development of three Chinese ethical systems.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The people, events, and ideas that shaped China's early history continue to influence China's role in today's world.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Confucius
- filial piety
- bureaucracy
- Daoism
- Legalism
- *I Ching*
- yin and yang
- Qin Dynasty
- Shi Huangdi
- autocracy

**SETTING THE STAGE** The Zhou Dynasty, as you read in Chapter 2, lasted for at least eight centuries, from approximately 1027 to 256 B.C. For the first 300 years of their long reign, the Zhou kings controlled a large empire, including both eastern and western lands. Local rulers reported to the king, who had the ultimate power. By the latter years of the Zhou Dynasty, the lords of dependent territories began to think of themselves as independent kings. Their almost constant conflict, which is known as “the warring states period,” led to the decline of the Zhou Dynasty.

## TAKING NOTES

**Recognizing Effects**  
Use a web to indicate how the chaos of the warring states affected the philosophy, politics, and cities of China.



## Confucius and the Social Order

Toward the end of the Zhou Dynasty, China moved away from its ancient values of social order, harmony, and respect for authority. Chinese scholars and philosophers developed different solutions to restore these values.

**Confucius Urges Harmony** China's most influential scholar was **Confucius** (kuhn•FYOO•shuhs). Born in 551 B.C., Confucius lived in a time when the Zhou Dynasty was in decline. He led a scholarly life, studying and teaching history, music, and moral character.

Confucius was born at a time of crisis and violence in China. He had a deep desire to restore the order and moral living of earlier times to his society. Confucius believed that social order, harmony, and good government could be restored in China if society were organized around five basic relationships. These were the relationships between: 1) ruler and subject, 2) father and son, 3) husband and wife, 4) older brother and younger brother, and 5) friend and friend. A code of proper conduct regulated each of these relationships. For example, rulers should practice kindness and virtuous living. In return, subjects should be loyal and law-abiding.

Three of Confucius's five relationships were based upon the family. Confucius stressed that children should practice **filial piety**, or respect for their parents and ancestors. Filial piety, according to Confucius, meant devoting oneself to one's parents during their lifetime. It also required honoring their memory after death through the performance of certain rituals.

- Confucius  
5 basic relationships

- filial piety

In the following passage, Confucius—the “Master”—expresses his thoughts on the concept:

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

Ziyou [a disciple of Confucius] asked about filial piety. The Master said: “Nowadays people think they are dutiful sons when they feed their parents. Yet they also feed their dogs and horses. Unless there is respect, where is the difference?”

CONFUCIUS, *Analects* 2.7

Confucius wanted to reform Chinese society by showing rulers how to govern wisely. Impressed by Confucius’s wisdom, the duke of Lu appointed him minister of justice. According to legend, Confucius so overwhelmed people by his kindness and courtesy that almost overnight, crime vanished from Lu. When the duke’s ways changed, however, Confucius became disillusioned and resigned.

Confucius spent the remainder of his life teaching. His students later collected his words in a book called the *Analects*. A disciple named Mencius (MEHN•shee•uhs) also spread Confucius’s ideas.

**Confucian Ideas About Government** Confucius said that education could transform a humbly born person into a gentleman. In saying this, he laid the groundwork for the creation of a **bureaucracy**, a trained civil service, or those who run the government. According to Confucius, a gentleman had four virtues: “In his private conduct he was courteous, in serving his master he was punctilious [precise], in providing for the needs of the people he gave them even more than their due; in exacting service from the people, he was just.” Education became critically important to career advancement in the bureaucracy.

Confucianism was never a religion, but it was an ethical system, a system based on accepted principles of right and wrong. It became the foundation for Chinese government and social order. In addition, the ideas of Confucius spread beyond China and influenced civilizations throughout East Asia.

## Other Ethical Systems

In addition to Confucius, other Chinese scholars and philosophers developed ethical systems with very different philosophies. Some stressed the importance of nature, others, the power of government.

**Daoists Seek Harmony** For a Chinese thinker named Laozi (low•dzuh), who may have lived during the sixth century B.C., only the natural order was important. The natural order involves relations among all living things. His book *Dao De Jing* (*The Way of Virtue*) expressed Laozi’s belief. He said that a universal force called the Dao (dow), meaning “the Way,” guides all things. Of all the creatures of nature,

## History Makers



**Confucius**  
551–479 B.C.

Confucius was born to a poor family. As an adult, he earned his living as a teacher. But he longed to put his principles into action by advising political leaders. Finally, at around age 50, Confucius won a

post as minister in his home state. According to legend, he set such a virtuous example that a purse lying in the middle of the street would be untouched for days.

After Confucius resigned his post as minister, he returned to teaching. He considered himself a failure because he had never held high office. Yet Confucius’s ideas have molded Chinese thought for centuries.



**Laozi**  
sixth century B.C.

Although a person named Laozi is credited with being the first philosopher of Daoism, no one knows for sure whether he really existed. Legend has it that Laozi’s mother carried him in her womb for 62 years

and that he was born with white hair and wrinkled skin. Laozi’s followers claimed that he was a contemporary of Confucius.

Unlike Confucius, however, Laozi believed that government should do as little as possible and leave the people alone. Laozi thought that people could do little to influence the outcome of events. Daoism offered communion with nature as an alternative to political chaos.

#### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH LINKS For more on Confucius and Laozi, go to [classzone.com](http://classzone.com)

Kind Confucius

Vocabulary  
Legend: a story handed down from earlier times, especially one believed to be historical

Bureaucracy

Gentleman's Virtues

→ Daoism background

according to Laozi, only humans fail to follow the Dao. They argue about questions of right and wrong, good manners or bad. According to Laozi, such arguments are pointless. In the following, he explains the wisdom of the Dao:

**PRIMARY SOURCE** A

The Dao never does anything,  
yet through it all things are done.

If powerful men and women  
could center themselves in it,  
the whole world would be transformed  
by itself, in its natural rhythms.  
People would be content  
with their simple, everyday lives, in harmony, and free of desire.

When there is no desire,  
all things are at peace.

LAOZI, *Dao De Jing*, Passage 37

**MAIN IDEA**

**Analyzing Primary Sources**

A What do you think is the Daoist attitude toward being a powerful person?

The philosophy of Laozi came to be known as **Daoism**. Its search for knowledge and understanding of nature led Daoism's followers to pursue scientific studies. Daoists made many important contributions to the sciences of alchemy, astronomy, and medicine.

*Legalism* →

**Legalists Urge Harsh Rule** In sharp contrast to the followers of Confucius and Laozi was a group of practical political thinkers called the Legalists. They believed that a highly efficient and powerful government was the key to restoring order in society. They got their name from their belief that government should use the law to end civil disorder and restore harmony. Hanfeizi and Li Si were among the founders of **Legalism**.

The Legalists taught that a ruler should provide rich rewards for people who carried out their duties well. Likewise, the disobedient should be harshly punished. In practice, the Legalists stressed punishment more than rewards. For example, anyone caught outside his own village without a travel permit should have his ears or nose chopped off.

The Legalists believed in controlling ideas as well as actions. They suggested that a ruler burn all writings that might encourage people to criticize government.

**Chinese Ethical Systems**

Confucianism	Daoism	Legalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social order, harmony, and good government should be based on family relationships.</li> <li>• Respect for parents and elders is important to a well-ordered society.</li> <li>• Education is important both to the welfare of the individual and to society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The natural order is more important than the social order.</li> <li>• A universal force guides all things.</li> <li>• Human beings should live simply and in harmony with nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A highly efficient and powerful government is the key to social order.</li> <li>• Punishments are useful to maintain social order.</li> <li>• Thinkers and their ideas should be strictly controlled by the government.</li> </ul>

**SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts**

1. **Comparing** Which of these three systems stresses the importance of government and a well-ordered society?
2. **Synthesizing** Which of these systems seems to be most moderate and balanced? Explain.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Summarizing**

How did the Legalists think that a society could be made to run well?

After all, it was for the prince to govern and the people to obey. Eventually, Legalist ideas gained favor with a prince of a new dynasty that replaced the Zhou. That powerful ruler soon brought order to China.

**I Ching and Yin and Yang** People with little interest in the philosophical debates of the Confucians, Daoists, and Legalists found answers to life's questions elsewhere. Some consulted a book of oracles called *I Ching* (also spelled *Yi Jing*) to solve ethical or practical problems. Readers used the book by throwing a set of coins, interpreting the results, and then reading the appropriate oracle or prediction. The *I Ching* (*The Book of Changes*) helped people to lead a happy life by offering good advice and simple common sense.

Other people turned to the ideas of ancient thinkers, such as the concept of **yin and yang**—two powers that together represented the natural rhythms of life. Yin represents all that is cold, dark, soft, and mysterious. Yang is the opposite—warm, bright, hard, and clear. The symbol of yin and yang is a circle divided into halves, as shown in the emblem to the upper right. The circle represents the harmony of yin and yang. Both forces represent the rhythm of the universe and complement each other. Both the *I Ching* and yin and yang helped Chinese people understand how they fit into the world.



▲ Traditional yin-and-yang symbol

## The Qin Dynasty Unifies China

In the third century B.C., the **Qin Dynasty** (chihn) replaced the Zhou Dynasty. It emerged from the western state of Qin. The ruler who founded the Qin Dynasty employed Legalist ideas to subdue the warring states and unify his country.

**A New Emperor Takes Control** In 221 B.C., after ruling for over 20 years, the Qin ruler assumed the name **Shi Huangdi** (shihw hwahng•dee), which means "First Emperor." The new emperor had begun his reign by halting the internal battles that had sapped China's strength. Next he turned his attention to defeating invaders and crushing resistance within China to his rule. Shi Huangdi's armies attacked the invaders north of the Huang He and south as far as what is now Vietnam. His victories doubled China's size. Shi Huangdi was determined to unify China.

Shi Huangdi acted decisively to crush political opposition at home. To destroy the power of rival warlords, he introduced a policy called "strengthening the trunk and weakening the branches." He commanded all the noble families to live in the capital city under his suspicious gaze. This policy, according to tradition, uprooted 120,000 noble families. Seizing their land, the emperor carved China into 36 administrative districts. He sent Qin officials to control them.

To prevent criticism, Shi Huangdi and his prime minister, the Legalist philosopher Li Su, murdered hundreds of Confucian scholars. They also ordered "useless" books burned. These books were the works of Confucian thinkers and poets who disagreed with the Legalists. Practical books about medicine and farming, however, were spared. Through measures

▼ Although a tyrant, Shi Huangdi is considered the founder of unified China. The word *Qin* is the origin of *China*.



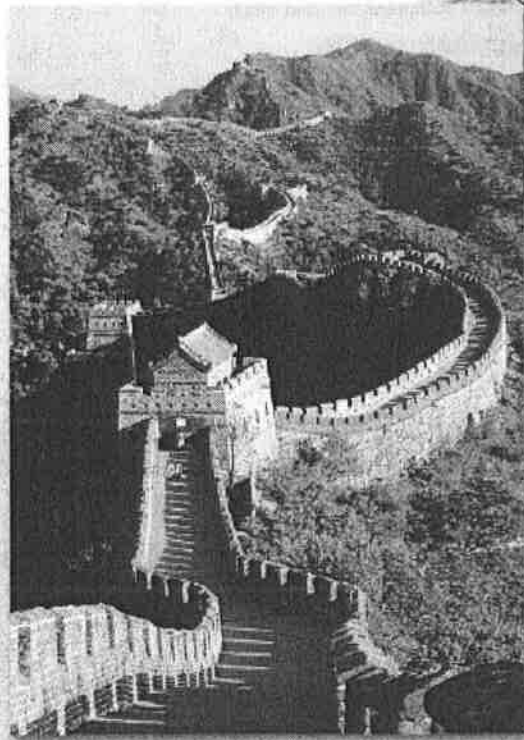
*I Ching*  
*Yin/Yang*  
*Started 3rd cent. B.C.*  
*Legalists*  
*1st emperor*  
*China grew by 2x*  
*Strengthen the trunk, weaken the branches*  
*Ruled with iron fist*

## The Great Wall of China

From the Yellow Sea in the east to the Gobi Desert in the west, the Great Wall twisted like a dragon's tail for thousands of miles. Watch towers rose every 200 to 300 yards along the wall.

In the time of Shi Huangdi, hundreds of thousands of peasants collected, hauled, and dumped millions of tons of stone, dirt, and rubble to fill the core of the Great Wall.

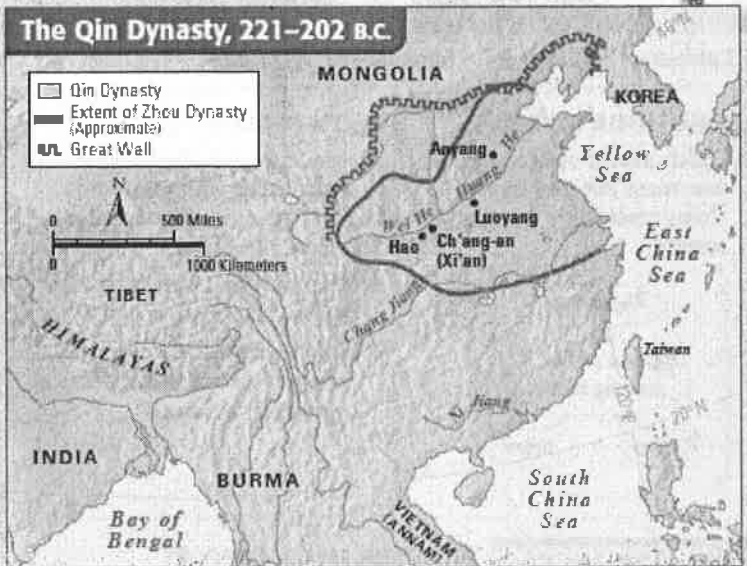
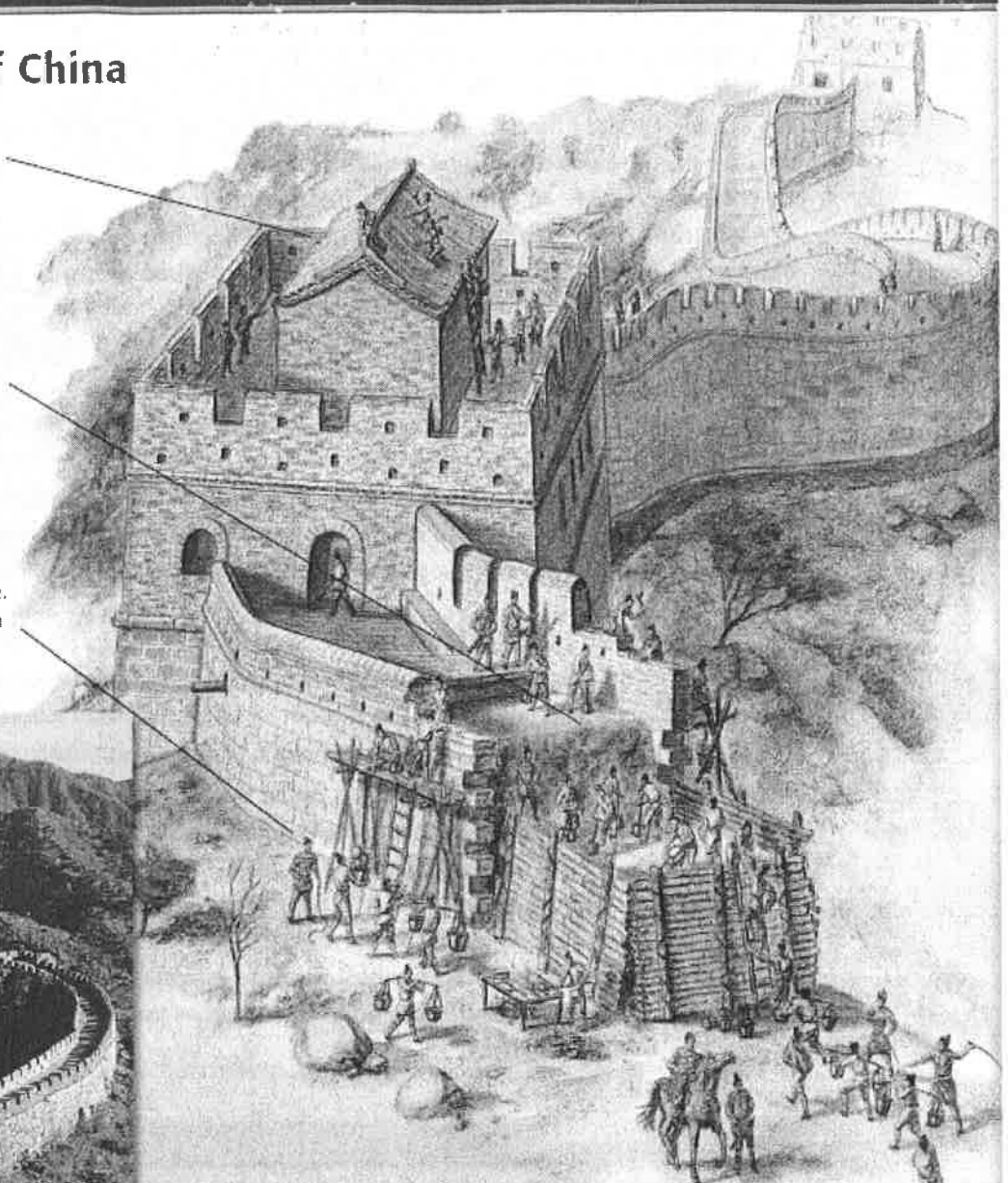
Slabs of cut stone on the outside of the wall enclosed a heap of pebbles and rubble on the inside. Each section of the wall rose to a height of 20 to 25 feet.



Although Shi Huangdi built the earliest unified wall, the wall as it exists today dates from the later Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

### SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Visual Sources

1. **Making Inferences** What were the benefits of the watch towers along the wall?
2. **Drawing Conclusions** What modern structures serve the same purpose as the watch towers?



such as these, Shi Huangdi established an **autocracy**—a government that has unlimited power and uses it in an arbitrary manner.

**A Program of Centralization** Shi Huangdi's sweeping program of centralization included the building of a highway network of more than 4,000 miles. Also, he set the same standards throughout China for writing, law, currency, and weights and measures—even down to the length of cart axles. This last standard made sure that all vehicles could fit into the ruts of China's main roads.

Under Shi Huangdi's rule, irrigation projects increased farm production. Trade blossomed, thanks to the new road system. Trade pushed a new class of merchants into prominence. Despite these social advances, harsh taxes and repressive government made the Qin regime unpopular. Shi Huangdi had unified China at the expense of human freedom.

**Great Wall of China** Scholars hated Shi Huangdi for his book burning. Poor people hated him because they were forced to work on the building of a huge defensive wall. Earlier, Zhou rulers had erected smaller walls to discourage attacks by northern nomads. Shi Huangdi determined to close the gaps and extend the wall almost the length of the empire's border. Enemies would have to gallop halfway to Tibet to get around it.

The Great Wall of China arose on the backs of hundreds of thousands of peasants. The wall builders worked neither for wages nor for love of empire. They faced a terrible choice: work on the wall or die. Many of the laborers worked on the wall and died anyway, victims of the crushing labor or the harsh winter weather.

**The Fall of the Qin** The Qin Dynasty lasted only a short time. Though fully as cruel as his father, Shi Huangdi's son proved less able. Peasants rebelled just three years after the second Qin emperor took office. One of their leaders, a peasant from the land of Han, marched his troops into the capital city. By 202 B.C., the harsh Qin Dynasty gave way to the Han Dynasty, one of the longest in Chinese history.

While the Chinese explored the best ways to govern, ancient Greece also was experimenting with different forms of government, as you will read in Chapter 5.

*Autocracy*  
*Program to develop infrastructure*

**MAIN IDEA**

**Recognizing Effects**

What were the positive and negative effects of Shi Huangdi's rule?

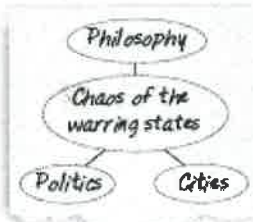
**SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Confucius • filial piety • bureaucracy • Daoism • Legalism • *I Ching* • yin and yang • Qin Dynasty • Shi Huangdi • autocracy

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which aspect of Chinese life was most affected by the chaos created by the warring states?



**MAIN IDEAS**

3. How did Confucius believe that social order, harmony, and good government could be restored in China?
4. What did the Legalists see as the key to restoring order?
5. What measures did Shi Huangdi take to crush political opposition at home?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **HYPOTHESIZING** How would followers of the three philosophical traditions in China react to the idea that "all men are created equal"?
7. **ANALYZING CAUSES** Why did Shi Huangdi have his critics murdered?
8. **MAKING INFERENCES** Would a ruler who followed Confucian or Daoist ideas have built the Great Wall? Why or why not?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS**  
Write a comparison-contrast paragraph in which you discuss the three Chinese ethical systems.

**CONNECT TO TODAY** **PREPARING AN ORAL REPORT**

Research to find out about the Great Wall today. Prepare an oral report in which you explain what the Great Wall looks like today and what it is used for.