

# Chin/ Han Dynasties

Chin Dynasty: 221-207 B.C.E

Han Dynasty: 206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.

Lily Dion & Tilynn Robinson

## The Qin and Han Dynasties



KEY	
	Qin empire
	Great Wall in Qin period
	Han empire
	Great Wall in Han period



# Geographic Impact on society



## Chin Dynasty

The Chin (Qin) Dynasty used to be located in East Asia and today is modern Shaanxi province, north of the Zhou Dynasty territory. Towards the east side of the Qin Dynasty there is the Yellow River, the east and south China sea and the Pacific Ocean. There are quite a few rivers in the dynasty allowing natural protection.

## Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty used to be located in East and Central Asia. Today it is modern China, Mongolia, Korea, and Vietnam. It has the Pacific Ocean and East China sea to the east. There are quite a few riverways going throughout the land, such as the Yellow River and Yangtze River. They also had a series of natural disasters that eventually led to the downfall of the dynasty.

# Political System and Impact on Society

The Qin Dynasty had the philosophy called Legalism. This meant clear rules and harsh punishments as a means of enforcing authority of the state. One of the most famous rulers was Qin Shi Huangdi. He named himself to mean "first emperor". With the resources he had he launched a military to conquer warring states and to reunify China. Scholars who didn't agree with Shi Huangdi were killed, Aristocrats were physically moved if they resisted centralizing policies and civilians were forced to labor.

The Han Dynasty was an autocracy, this meant it was governed by one leader and it had the support of an impressive imperial administration. The emperor ruled through edicts that declared his imperial will. The emperor also handled the investiture of kings and noblemen and appointed senior government officials. The succession of leadership was passed through the male line to the emperor's son of choice. There was the inner court, it consisted of eunuchs and their families, the emperor's most trusted advisers, women, servants (kept out of government affairs) and eunuchs. Only eunuchs had direct access to the emperor. The outer court consists of three branches: the Civil branch, the military, and the censorate. The Han also developed a structure for administering its vast territories. Regions under Han control were managed according to two different systems: areas to the east were divided into ten autonomous kingdoms, whereas the provinces to the west were controlled directly by the empire as commanderies. Soon they united them under the central authority of the emperor.

# Economic Systems and Impact on Society

After the success of the civilization of the Qin dynasty, Shihuangdi impose a uniform system of weights, measures, and currency and standardized the length of axles for carts and the written form of the Chinese language. This allowed people of different languages to communicate. Since the Qin dynasty was a Legalist dynasty most people believe that anyone other than soldiers, rulers etc. were useless

The Han dynasty was the most prosperous dynasties in imperial China. The Transcontinental Silk Road was their main trading route with other people. The Silk Road expanded all the way to the Mediterranean. Merchants from the Han territories traded mostly silk and paper due to it being new and popular. The Han social classes were not based on wealth or birth but on your merit and skills.

# Beliefs and Religious Impact on Culture

The Qin dynasty believed in Legalism. It was their belief/religious and political system. The Legalist thinkers believed that China's problems lay within the rules and laws. The people believed that it should be an enforced system with rewards and punishments. Legalists believed a more pessimistic view of humans, most believed they were short sighted and stupid. They only found interests in the rulers of the state as interesting. Legalists believed farmers and soldiers were the only essential functions and suppressing merchants, scholars etc. were useless.

The Hans believed in Confucianism, it's a polytheistic religion, meaning it has multiple gods. Confucian teachings were required reading for imperial education and politics.

# Rise of Civilization

Previously before the Qin dynasty was civilized, the empires before had a war for a very long time to reunify the empires in China. Qin Shihuangdi was one of the well known rulers from one of the various states vied to reunify China. With China being well stabled, Shihuangdi created a military in order to defeat the warring states. It took 10 years. Shortly after Shihuangdi laid the foundation for the dynasty.

The Han dynasty came to be due to the dynasty before it, the Qin dynasty, which was heavily influenced by the theory of legalism, which then emphasized the power of the state embodied in a strict legal code. This period was marked by authoritarian rule, harsh treatment of the population, and political violence, all of which led to rebellion and civil war. The rebel leader Liu Bang took control and sought to develop a political structure that would bring stability and unity to China.

# Art and Architecture

The Qin dynasty is well known for the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall of China was created in order to transport materials. It took 300,000 workers to create the Great Wall. Near the Wei River there is a replica of the state's ruling city palace. The worker in the Qin dynasty melted weapons in order to make giant statues in the capital city Xianyang. The Qin dynasty is also known for the Terracotta Army. It's a structure that has over 8,000 soldiers and the emperor himself. Architecture was very important to the Qin dynasty.

Terracotta Army



Art in the Han dynasty mostly comes from the tombs of the ruling families. The outside of the tombs were not adorned in any way, only marked by a pile of dirt. The inside of the tombs though are beautiful. The Wu family tomb in Jiexiang is the most famous with 2 underground chambers beneath 4 shrines. There are 70 carved stones, painted walls and ceilings depicting historical figures. This site contained about 3,000 examples of Han dynasty art figures. They had silver, bronze, gold, jade, silk and pottery implemented into these figures. Models of pottery houses were made with varying degrees of sophistication. There were also 2 full suits made of 2,000 pieces of jade.

# Writing System and Written History

Since Shi Huangdi unified the people in lands he conquered, there was a variety of languages and cultures. He replaced the previous religious script and standardized a non-alphabet written script. It was faster to write and useful for record keeping. This new script allowed people who did not speak the exact same languages to communicate together. The Han dynasty was right after the fall of the Qin dynasty therefore the Han dynasty used the language and made it their own.

The Eunuch Cai Lun introduced paper and paper making to china while Xu Shen compiled the first Chinese dictionary which included characters from not only the Han era but from Zhou and Shang eras as well. There was a boom in the network of historians due to these new discoveries. Sima Qian created "The Grand Scribs Records" and "Records of the Grand Historian" which are both resources used today. These books are also used to help decipher archaeological inscriptions.



# Major Technological Advances

The Qin dynasty was more advanced than the Roman empire at the time. Even though many people didn't agree with the punishments of the people who opposed to the political idea of legalism, the Qin dynasty made many advances. For the war before the Qin dynasty to reunify China, having china reunify was a lot especially since many groups of people came from different ethnicities, culture or languages. The Qin dynasty created a lot of well known architecture. The Qin dynasty also helped with writing systems for upcoming dynasties and put the idea of Legalism out there.

Inventors during the Han Dynasty invented the wheelbarrow, the seismograph, the compass, suspension bridges, deep drilling, blast furnaces, the adjustable wrench, the moldboard plow, the stirrup, the rudder, silk, and paper. There were also mathematical breakthroughs, new traditions and rituals, and advancements in medicine, such as moxibustion and acupuncture during this time.

# Golden Age

For the Qin dynasty there wasn't really a golden age but the Qin dynasty have caused a lot and advanced considering it as their golden age. As said constantly the Qin dynasty created the idea of Legalism in order to keep their empire going, which helped the Han dynasty. As also said constantly they are well known for the Terracotta Army and the Great Wall.

During the Han dynasty golden age there was peace, cultural and scientific progress, population and economic growth. Along with territorial expansion. Areas of present day Korea and Vietnam were brought under Han rule.

# Famous Citizens and their Achievements

Emperor Qin Shihuangdi- First Emperor of China first to unify China as one

Qin Er Shi- Second Emperor of China but overthrown quickly by Han

Li Si- Prime Minister of the Qin dynasty

Zhao Gao- Advisor of Shihuangdi, known to be corrupted

Meng Yi- General in the Qin Army

Created the idea of Legalism, Written System which helped the Han dynasty, and built well known structures such as the Great Wall and Terracotta Army

- The Eunuch Cai Lun introduced paper and paper making to china.

- Xu Shen compiled the first Chinese dictionary.

- Zhang Qian founded the Transcontinental Silk Road.

- The historian Sima Qian created one of the most important historical texts in China, the *Records of the Grand Historian*.

# Slavery

The Qin dynasty was very harsh with its rules around the Legalism philosophy. People were forced to work if they were prisoners of war or opposed to the ideas of the rulers of the Qin dynasty. They were forced to work for the Army, or build the Great Wall of China or the Terracotta Army. In China the Qin dynasty used the most slaves.

There was very little slavery, Lui Bangs first acts was to manumit agricultural workers enslaved during the Warring States period. When there was slavery it was in the form of Eunuchs or castrated servants (men only). This and forced labor was used mostly as a punishment by the government. When men were castrated their families were taken away and kept by the government as property.

# Fall of Civilization

The Qin dynasty ended in 206 B.C.E. During the period of two years the empire revolted against the new emperor which allows constant rebellion and retaliation. Warlord Xiang Yu quickly defeated the Qin army and executed the emperor which caused the dynasty to be separated into 18 states.

From 9-23 c.e. The Xin dynasty, ruled by Wang Mang, had rampant political corruption, deteriorating foreign relations, and disastrous economic policies. The people rebelled due to the flooding of the Yellow River in 11 c.e., which the masses took as a sign from the gods that Wang Mang had lost his legitimacy as a ruler. This led to the collapse of the Xin Dynasty as well as Wang Mang's death.

When the dynasty fell in 189-220 the rules of succession weren't very clear which led to the emperor's power weakening. Imperial officials then stepped in to take control. The territory was parceled out to the three generals, when the most powerful died (Cao Cao) the empire then divided into three different kingdoms, the Wei, Wu, and Shu Han dynasties. Many other factors had a part in destroying the empire, such as: Political turmoil and conflicts, economic problems, rebellion (Yellow Turban rebellion in 184-205 c.e.) and a series of natural disasters. After the demise of the Han dynasty it sent china into three centuries of chaos.

# World Wide Contributions

The Qin dynasty left us with well known structures. For example The Great Wall of China and the Terracotta Army. The Qin dynasty also helped the writing system of the Chinese language. They also helped the Han dynasty with leading the empire with Legalism even though it was less harsh.



Qin Dynasty Writing System

Today we have the wheelbarrow, the seismograph, the compass, suspension bridges, deep drilling, blast furnaces, the adjustable wrench, the moldboard plow, the stirrup, the rudder, silk, and paper and we still use them today. Sima Qian created "The Grand Scribes Records" and "Records of the Grand Historian" which are still used today as sources. Xu Shen compiled the first Chinese dictionary, it helped in forming the chinese language.

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