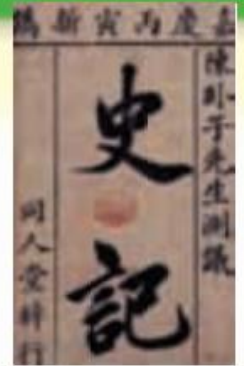


SECTION 5



Shi Huangdi

Records of the
Grand Historian



WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

A New Age In China

Sima Qian (sih MAH chen), who served later Chinese emperors as Grand Historian, recounted an inscription on a monument built by the first Qin emperor to praise his own deeds:

“The Emperor . . . rectified [put right] the laws, by which all things are regulated, human affairs are clarified, and fathers and sons united.

Being sagacious [wise], intelligent, benevolent, and righteous, he manifested [made clear to see] the Way [the Dao] and reason . . .

All things receive his favor, and live peacefully in their own abode [house].”

—Records of the Grand Historian

Focus Question How did powerful emperors unite much of China and bring about a golden age of cultural achievements?

Strong Rulers Unite China

Objectives

- Understand how Shi Huangdi unified China and established a Legalist government.
- Describe how Han rulers strengthened the economy and government of China.
- Outline why the Han period is considered a golden age of Chinese civilization.
- Analyze why many Chinese people accepted Buddhist ideas.

Terms, People, and Places

Shi Huangdi	civil servant
Wudi	warlord
monopoly	acupuncture
expansionism	

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence Keep track of the sequence of important events in the Qin and Han periods by recording them in a chart like this one in the order they occurred.

Date	Event

From his base in western China, the powerful ruler of the state of Qin rose to unify all of China. An ancient Chinese poet and historian described how Zheng (jeng) crushed all his rivals: “Cracking his long whip, he drove the universe before him, swallowing up the eastern and the western Zhou and overthrowing the feudal lords.”

In 221 B.C., Zheng proclaimed himself **Shi Huangdi** (shur hwahng dee), or “First Emperor.” Although his methods were brutal, he ushered in China’s classical age—a term historians use when a civilization sets patterns in government, philosophy, religion, science, and the arts that serve as a framework for later cultures.

Shi Huangdi Unifies China

Shi Huangdi was determined to end the divisions that had splintered Zhou China. He spent nearly 20 years conquering most of the warring states. Then, imposing punishments for failure, he built the strong, authoritarian Qin government.

Legalism Establishes Harsh Rule Shi Huangdi centralized power with the help of Legalist advisers. Legalism was based on the teachings of Hanfeizi (hahn fay dzuh), who had died in 233 B.C. According to Hanfeizi, “the nature of man is evil. His goodness is acquired.” Greed, he declared, was the motive for most actions and the cause of most conflicts. Hanfeizi insisted that the only way to achieve order was to pass strict laws and impose harsh punishments for crimes.



A Chinese artist captured Shi Huangdi's harsh approach in this painting, in which Legalists execute scholars as books burn in the foreground.

To Legalists, strength, not goodness, was a ruler's greatest virtue. "The ruler alone possesses power," declared Hanfeizi, "wielding it like lightning or like thunder." Many feudal rulers chose Legalism as the most effective way to keep order. Shi Huangdi made it the official policy of the Qin government. He then moved harshly against his critics. He tortured, killed, or enslaved many who opposed his rule. Hardest hit were the feudal nobles and Confucian scholars who loathed his laws.

To end dissent, Shi Huangdi approved a ruthless campaign of book burning, ordering the destruction of all writings other than manuals on topics such as medicine and agriculture. Laws such as these were so cruel that later generations despised Legalism. Yet Legalist ideas survived for hundreds of years in laws that forced people to work on government projects and punished those who shirked their duties. Indeed, the policy of enslaving people as punishment for crimes lasted through most of the following dynasty, though only a very small percentage of Chinese were enslaved.

Unity Imposed Shi Huangdi also abolished feudalism, which required little allegiance from local rulers to the central government. He replaced the feudal states with 36 military districts and appointed loyal officials to administer them. Shi Huangdi

forced noble families to live in his capital at Xianyang (shyahn yahng), where he could monitor them. He distributed the lands of the displaced nobles to peasants. Still, peasants had to pay high taxes to support Shi Huangdi's armies and building projects.

To promote unity, the First Emperor standardized weights and measures and replaced the diverse coins of the Zhou states with Qin coins. He also had scholars create uniformity in Chinese writing. Workers repaired and extended roads and canals to strengthen the transportation system. A new law even required cart axles to be the same width so that wheels could run in the same ruts on all Chinese roads.

Constructing the Great Wall Shi Huangdi's most remarkable and costly achievement was the Great Wall. In the past, individual feudal states had built walls to defend their lands against raiders. Shi Huangdi ordered the walls to be joined. Hundreds of thousands of laborers worked for years through bitter cold and burning heat. They pounded earth and stone into a mountainous wall almost 25 feet high and topped with a wide brick road. Many workers died in the harsh conditions.

Over the centuries, the wall was extended and rebuilt many times. Eventually, it snaked for thousands of miles across northern China. While the wall did not keep invaders out of China, it did demonstrate the emperors' ability to mobilize China's vast resources. The Great Wall became an important symbol to the Chinese people, dividing and protecting their civilized world from the nomadic bands north of the wall.

Qin Dynasty Collapses When Shi Huangdi died in 210 B.C., anger over heavy taxes, forced labor, and cruel policies exploded into revolts. As Qin power officially collapsed in 206 B.C., Gao Zu (gow dzoo), an illiterate peasant leader, defeated rival armies and founded the new Han dynasty four years later.

Do This



Checkpoint What kind of government did Legalists favor?

Do This

Geography Interactive
For: Audio guided tour
Web Code: nap-0351

Qin and Han Empires

Map Skills Under the Qin and Han dynasties, Chinese rule expanded significantly, as did the Great Wall (pictured below).

1. **Locate** (a) Great Wall (b) Qin empire (c) Han empire (d) Chengdu (e) Takla Makan Desert
2. **Place** What natural barriers helped protect China from invaders?

3. **Draw Conclusions** How did the Great Wall's placement relate to the extent of the empires? What does this tell you about where invaders came from?

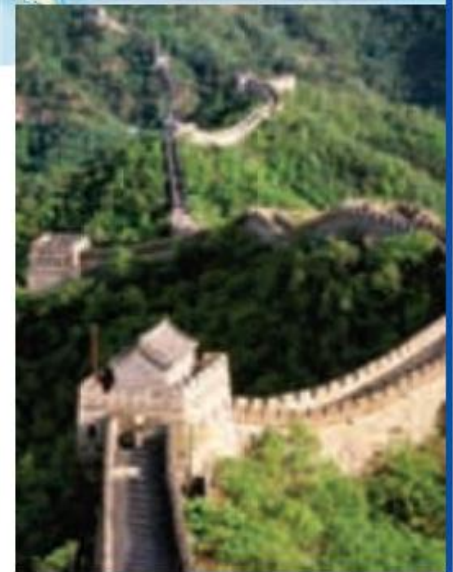


The Han Dynasty Strengthens China

As emperor, Gao Zu set about restoring order and justice to his empire. Although he continued earlier efforts to unify China, he lowered taxes and eased Legalist policies. In a key move, he appointed Confucian scholars as advisors. His policies created strong foundations for the Han dynasty, which lasted from 202 B.C. until A.D. 220.

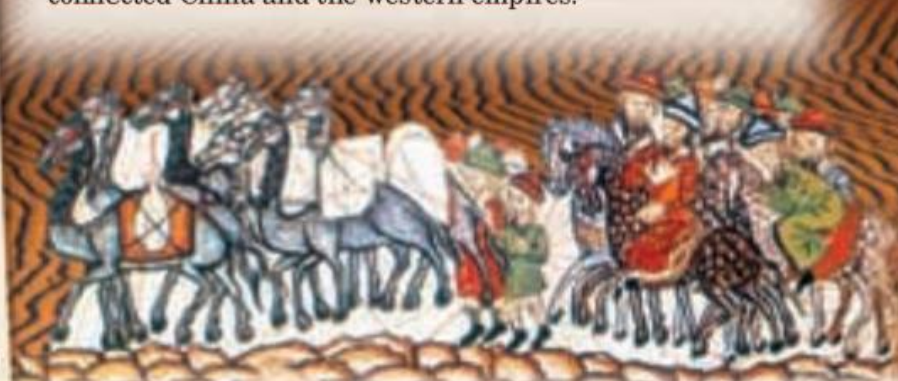
Emperor Wudi Makes Improvements The most famous Han emperor, **Wudi** (woo dee), took China to new heights. During his long reign from about 141 B.C. to 87 B.C., he strengthened the government and economy. Like Gao Zu, he chose officials from Confucian “men of wisdom and virtue.” To train scholars, he set up an imperial university at Xian (shyahn).

Wudi furthered economic growth by improving canals and roads. He had granaries set up across the empire so the government could buy grain when it was abundant and sell it at stable prices when it was scarce. He reorganized finances and imposed a government monopoly on iron and salt. A **monopoly** is the complete control of a product or business by one person or group. The sale of iron and salt gave the government a source of income other than taxes on peasants.



Zhang Qian Explores Outside China

Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* includes the accounts of Zhang Qian, a diplomat whom Emperor Wudi sent on various journeys to establish contact with peoples outside the Han empire. Zhang traveled as far as India and the eastern edge of the Roman empire. The information he brought back about the rich kingdoms he had seen led to the founding of the Silk Road, the legendary trade network that connected China and the western empires.



“Southeast of Ta-hsia [Bactria] is the kingdom of Shen-tu [India]. When I was in Ta-hsia, Chang Ch'ien [Zhang Qian] reported, 'I saw bamboo canes from Ch'ung and cloth made in the [Chinese] province of Shu. When I asked the people how they had gotten such articles, they replied, 'Our merchants go to buy them in the markets of Shen-tu.' Shen-tu, they told me, lies several thousand *li*¹ southeast of Ta-hsia. The people cultivate the land and live much like the people of Ta-shia. The region is said to be hot and damp. The inhabitants ride elephants when they go into battle. The kingdom is situated on a great river. . . .

Thus the emperor learned of . . . great states rich in unusual products whose people cultivated the land and made their living in much the same way as the Chinese.”

—*Records of the Grand Historian*

¹ A *li* is an ancient Chinese measurement equal to about one third of a mile.

Wudi followed a policy of **expansionism**, or expanding a country's territory, by increasing the amount of land under Chinese rule. He fought many battles to expand China's borders and to drive nomadic peoples beyond the Great Wall. Chinese armies added outposts in Manchuria, Korea, northern Vietnam, Tibet, and Central Asia. Soldiers, traders, and settlers slowly spread Chinese influence across these areas.

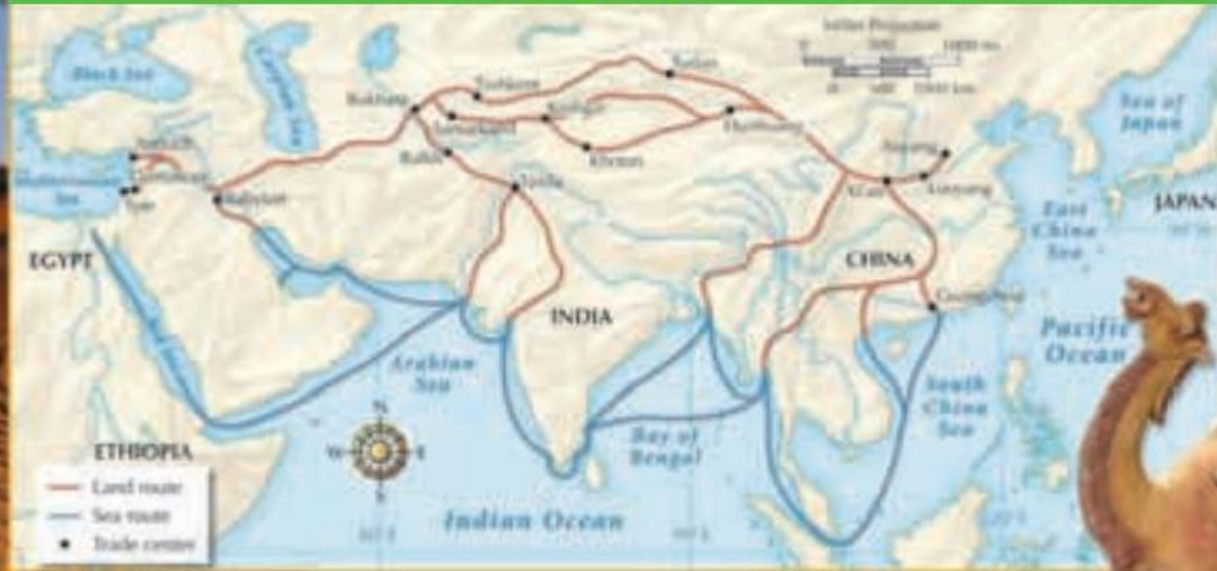
Silk Road Links China to the West The emperor Wudi opened up a network of trade routes, later called the Silk Road, that would link China and the West for centuries. During the Han period, new foods such as grapes, figs, cucumbers, and walnuts flowed into China from western Asia. Lucky traders might return to China bearing furs from Central Asia, muslin from India, or glass from Rome. At the same time, the Chinese sent large quantities of silk westward to fill a growing demand for the prized fabric.

Eventually, the Silk Road stretched for 4,000 miles, linking China to the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East. Few traders covered the entire distance, however; instead, goods were relayed in stages from one set of traders to another. At the western end, trade was controlled by various peoples, including the Persians.

China Selects Scholar-Officials Han emperors made Confucianism the official belief system of the state. They relied on well-educated scholars to run the bureaucratic government. A scholar-official was expected to match the Confucian ideal of a gentleman. He would be courteous and dignified and possess a thorough knowledge of history, music, poetry, and Confucian teachings.

Founding the Civil Service System Han emperors adopted the idea that **civil servants**—that is, officials in the government—should win their positions by merit, rather than through family ties as had occurred

The Silk Road



The Silk Road eventually connected people from China to the Mediterranean Sea. Silk Road traders appeared in art for centuries—at left, on a Spanish map from the 14th century; at right, in a ceramic work from China, from the 7th or 8th century.

Do This

Thinking Critically

- 1. Synthesize Information** How were people in Ta-hsia able to buy goods from the Chinese province of Shu?
- 2. Analyze Information** How do you think the knowledge Zheng gained helped establish the Silk Road?

Vocabulary Builder

compiled—(kum PYLD) *vt.* created by gathering things together

in the past. In the Han civil service system, a young man would start in a clerical job. Once he proved his abilities, he would move up in local government. If he continued to excel, he would eventually be recruited into the civil service and might be tested on his knowledge of government policy. Essential to his studies were the Five Classics, a collection of histories, poems, and handbooks compiled by Confucius and others that served as a guide to conduct for about 2,000 years.

Much later, in the 580s, the Sui dynasty set up a formal system of civil service exams, which were given at the local, provincial, and national levels. In theory, any man could take the exams. In practice, only those who could afford years of study, such as the sons of wealthy landowners or officials, could hope to succeed. Occasionally, a village or wealthy family might pay for the education of a brilliant peasant boy. If he passed the exams and obtained a government job, he, his family, and his clan all enjoyed immense prestige and moved up in society. Confucian teachings about filial piety and the superiority of men prevented women from taking the civil service exam. As a result, women were excluded from government jobs.

The civil service system remained in use until 1912. It put men trained in Confucian thought at every level of government and created an enduring system of values. Dynasties rose and fell, but Confucian influence survived.

Han Empire Overthrown As the Han dynasty aged, signs of decay appeared. Court intrigues undermined emperors who could no longer control powerful **warlords**, or local military rulers. Weak emperors let canals and roads fall into disrepair. Burdened by heavy taxes and crushing debt, many peasants revolted. Thousands of rebellious peasants abandoned their villages and fled to the mountains. There they joined secret groups of bandits known by colorful names like the “Red Eyebrows” and the “Green Woodsmen.”

In A.D. 220, ambitious warlords overthrew the last Han emperor. After 400 years of unity, China broke up into several kingdoms. Adding to the disorder, invaders poured over the Great Wall and set up their own states. In time, many of these newcomers were absorbed into Chinese civilization.

Do This

✓ **Checkpoint** How did Han emperors further economic growth?



Acupuncturists like this woman place needles in specific spots on the body to treat each ailment.

Achievements of the Han Golden Age

The Han period was one of the golden ages of Chinese civilization. Han China made such tremendous advances in so many fields that the Chinese later called themselves “the people of Han.”

Advancing Science and Medicine Han scientists wrote texts on chemistry, zoology, botany, and other subjects. Han astronomers carefully observed and measured movements of the stars and planets, which enabled them to improve earlier calendars and invent better timekeeping devices. One scientist invented a simple seismograph to detect and measure earthquakes.

The scientist Wang Chong disagreed with the widely held belief that comets and eclipses showed heaven’s anger. “On the average, there is one moon eclipse about every 180 days,” he wrote, “and a solar eclipse about every 41 or 42 months. Eclipses . . . are not caused by political action.” Wang Chong argued that no scientific theories should be accepted unless they were supported by proof.

Chinese physicians diagnosed diseases, developed anesthetics, and experimented with herbal remedies and other drugs. Many doctors promoted the use of **acupuncture**. In this medical treatment, developed about 2500 B.C., the doctor inserts needles into the skin at specific points to relieve pain or treat various illnesses.

Forging Ahead With Technology and Engineering In its time, Han China was the most technologically advanced civilization in the world. Cai Lun (ky loon), an official of the Han court, invented a method for making paper out of wood pulp. His basic method is still used to manufacture paper today. The Chinese also pioneered advanced methods of shipbuilding and invented the rudder to steer. Other practical inventions included bronze and iron stirrups, fishing reels, wheelbarrows, and suspension bridges. Some of these ideas moved west slowly, reaching Europe hundreds of years later.

Expanding the Arts The walled cities of Han China boasted splendid temples and palaces amid elegant parks. Although these wooden buildings have not survived, Han poets and historians have described their grandeur. In addition, artisans produced delicate jade and ivory carvings and fine ceramic figures. Bronze-workers and silk-makers improved on earlier techniques and set high standards for future generations.

Lessons for Women, a handbook of behavior written by Ban Zhao (bahn jow) around A.D. 100, carefully spells out the proper behavior for women and men. Ban Zhao favored equal education for boys and girls. However, she stressed that women should be obedient, respectful, and submissive. “Let a woman modestly yield to others,” she advised. “Let her respect others.”

Do This

✓ **Checkpoint** What sorts of achievements made the Han period a golden age?

The Chinese Accept Buddhism

By A.D. 100, missionaries and merchants had spread Mahayana Buddhism from India into China. At first, the Chinese had trouble with the new faith. For example, Chinese tradition valued family loyalty, while Buddhism honored monks and nuns who gave up the benefits of family life for a life of solitary meditation.

Despite obstacles such as this, Buddhism became increasingly popular, especially in times of crisis. Its great appeal was the promise of escape from suffering. Mahayana Buddhism offered the hope of eternal happiness and presented the Buddha as a compassionate, merciful god. Through prayer, good works, and devotion, anyone could hope to gain salvation. Neither Daoism nor Confucianism emphasized this idea of personal salvation.

By A.D. 400, Buddhism had spread throughout China. Buddhist monasteries became important centers of learning and the arts. Buddhism absorbed many Confucian and Daoist traditions. Chinese Buddhist monks stressed filial piety and honored Confucius.

 **Checkpoint** Why did Buddhism appeal to many people in China?

 Do This

Looking Ahead

Shi Huangdi, Gao Zu, Wudi, and later Han rulers forged a vast and varied land into a united China. Han rulers created an empire roughly the size of the continental United States. During this period, Chinese officials established the system of administration that would survive until 1912. In coming centuries, China would undergo great changes. It would break up and be painfully reassembled over and over. On the whole, however, Chinese civilization would flourish. After periods of disunity, in A.D. 581 a new dynasty, the Sui, would turn to Confucian scholars to revive the days of Han greatness.



In Mahayana Buddhism, people hope to become *bodhisattvas*, or enlightened people, who help others gain salvation. The *bodhisattva* of compassion and mercy (above), called Kuan-yin in China, is one of the most popular.

5 Assessment

 Do This 1-5

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0351

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence**
Use your completed chart to answer the Focus Question: How did powerful emperors unite much of China and bring about a golden age of cultural achievements?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Summarize** What were three steps Shi Huangdi took to unify China?
4. **Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment**
What aspects of the civil service system do you think allowed it to last for such a great length of time?
5. **Determine Relevance** Select three achievements made during the Han period and describe why you think they were significant advancements.

Writing About History

Quick Write: Draft a Quick Outline On some essay tests, you will not be given much time to write an essay. Drafting a quick outline can help you save time as you write your response. Write a quick outline of a response to one of the following essay topics:

- the role of Legalism in Qin government
- the importance of the Silk Road
- the greatest cultural achievements of the Han