# Classical China

## Geography

**How did geography impact Chinese culture?**

- Huang He (Yellow) and Yangtze Rivers provided silt for first Chinese civilizations/dynasties
  - Shang (1650 – 1027 BCE)
  - Zhou (1027 – 221 BCE)
- **Isolated by Geography**
  - Pacific Ocean, Taklimakan and Gobi Deserts, and Himalayan Mountains
- Isolation contributed to *ethnocentrism* or feelings of cultural superiority
  - Called themselves the “Middle Kingdom” believing they were the center of the universe

## Mandate of Heaven

**What was the Mandate of Heaven and how was it gained and lost?**

- Ruling families (Dynasties) claimed they had the Mandate of Heaven or the approval of the gods
  - Gained: prosperity, victory in war, peace, security, stability was evidence that the gods were happy
  - Lost: natural disasters, famine, defeat in war, feelings of insecurity, decaying walls, roads, canals was evidence that the gods were angry
- **Dynastic Cycle:** old dynasty loses the Mandate of Heaven and new family (dynasty) would gain the Mandate of Heaven

## Qin Dynasty 221 BCE - 207 BCE

**What impact did the Qin Dynasty have on China?**

- Emperor Shi Huangdi ruled China
  - Legalism philosophy
  - Centralized the government
  - Created military districts
  - National laws, writing, and money
  - Uniformed system of weights and measures
  - Repaired canals and roads
  - Promoted Chinese writing
- Began construction of the Great Wall of China connecting existing defensive walls
| **Great Wall of China** | • Constructed over an 1800 year period  
  o First defensive walls 8th century BCE  
  o Great Wall: Qin 3rd century BCE  
• Over 13,000 miles of walls built of earth, stone, and glutinous rice  
  o Over 1,200 miles of wall gone  
• 25 feet tall with watchtowers 40 feet  
• Built, in part, by criminals as punishment  
• Estimates of 400,000 – 1 million people died building the wall – buried inside wall  
• Unsuccessful keeping out invaders  
  o 1200s Mongols defeat Tang Dynasty  
  o 1800s Manchurians defeat Ming Dynasty  
• New sections of the wall discovered as late as 2012 |
| **Han Dynasty 207 BCE - 220 CE** | • Han Emperors included **Wudi**  
  o Confucian philosophy  
  o Civil Service System educated government officials  
  o Imperial **universities** taught Confucian philosophy  
• Roads and canals improved for internal trade  
• Government monopoly on salt, iron, and alcohol  
• Developed the **Silk Roads** for trade with the west– breaking China’s isolation  
• Began China’s first Golden Age |
| **Han Golden Age** | • **Medicine**  
  o Acupuncture  
  o Anesthesia  
• **Paper** making from plant fibers  
  o Connected sheets to create “books”  
• **Farming Technology**  
  o Wheelbarrow and iron plow  
  o Water mill to grind grain  
• **Science and Technology**  
  o Ship rudder  
  o Seismograph to measure earthquakes  
  o Magnetic compass  
  o Calendar based on sun and moon  
  o Estimated Pi (3.14)  
• Art - Jade, ivory, **porcelain**, silk |
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<tr>
<th>Silk Roads</th>
<th>What were the Silk Roads?</th>
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<td>• 4,000 miles of trade routes connecting China, to the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Europe</td>
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<td>• Used by merchants from 1st century BCE – 15th century CE</td>
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<td>• Traded silk, porcelain, ceramics, spices, foods, animals (horses), gems, slaves</td>
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<td>• Given the name “silk roads” in 1870s</td>
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<tr>
<th>Decline of the Han Dynasty</th>
<th>Why did the Han Dynasty decline?</th>
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<tr>
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<td>• Han lost the Mandate of Heaven following the death of Wudi</td>
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<td>o Unity lost to local warlords for 400 years</td>
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<td>o Canals and roads began to crumble and were not maintained</td>
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<td>o High taxes led to revolts</td>
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<td>o Northern invaders overran the Great Wall of China</td>
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<td>• No single family will have the Mandate of Heaven until the Tang Dynasty in the early 7th century C.E.</td>
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