

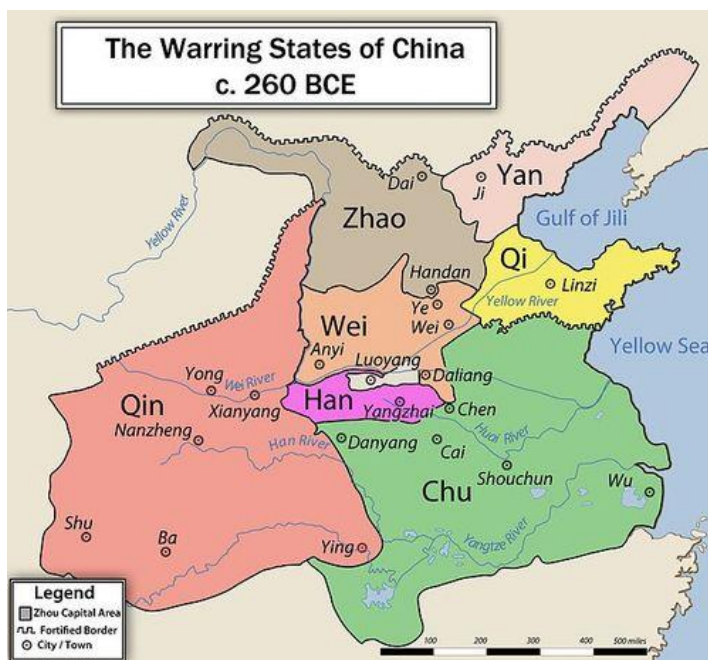
Classical China: Past the Warring States

The Warring States, Philosophy, and the Qin and Han Dynasties

Missing a Transition

The Spring and Autumn Period (771-481 BC) of the Zhou Dynasty eventually gave way to the Warring States Period (480-221 BC), in which Zhou lords turned their own armies against each other in a fight for control over the others. Whereas the Spring and Autumn Period was a time of annexation, the Warring States Period was a time of competition.

While it is tempting to declare the Warring States Period the end of the Zhou Dynasty, there was still a Zhou emperor on the throne and the different states were still technically under the control of that emperor. Unfortunately for the Zhou family, the reality was that they exercised little to no control beyond the capital.



The Warring States Period

Starting in 480 BC, the Warring States Period is marked by the constant conflict between the different Zhou states competing for land and power. As with any competition of power, foreign invaders also became a threat. As a result of the constant war and invasion, many states began to build fortifications along their borders – especially in the north. These walls of pounded earth were the first step towards the Great Wall of China.

A number of other new developments, technologies, and innovations came about in this period of competition. The chariot was being abandoned in favor of fighting on horseback thanks to the teachings of **steppe nomads**. Other nomads from the northwest brought ironworking to China c. 600 BC which revolutionized warfare. Around the same time, metalworkers from southern China were able to forge primitive steel due to their lack of access to tin and copper for bronze.

With a waning emperor came the growth of many states' governments and bureaucracies. Law codes were written down, governments imposed direct taxes, and standardized currencies were established. Many states even began to engage in large-scale public works projects.



The growth of the state led to the formation of **legalism**, a political philosophy that says that human nature is wicked and that the only way to make people behave in an orderly fashion is through strict laws and harsh punishments. Legalists believed that all aspects of life must be controlled, and that personal freedom must be sacrificed for the good of the state.

Another effect of the growth of state governments was the decline of aristocratic rule. Many of the traditional functions of **aristocrats** were taken over by the states. This meant that these aristocrats had to find new ways of exerting influence on the state, many tried to assume the role of advisors to rulers.

Confucianism

Kongzi, known as **Confucius** in Latin, was one of these aristocrats. Confucius had a hard time spreading his philosophy due to his birth in one of the smaller Zhou states. **Confucianism** blended with many elements of Chinese folk religion, most importantly **ancestral veneration**. Confucius drew a parallel between the family and the state. He believed that the family hierarchy was organized as father > sons > wife > daughters in order of age. In a similar way the state hierarchy was set up as ruler > public officials > common people.



Confucius essentially expanded family roles out to the state and applied the same requirements of family life to the state. According to him, government exists to serve the people and the ruler gains respect and authority by displaying fairness and integrity. Confucian teachings emphasized **benevolence**, **pacifism**, justice, **rationalism**, loyalty, and **dignity**. Confucius believed in the basic goodness of human nature and sought to improve society by improving humanity.

Daoism

Founded by **Laozi**, an individual whose existence has not been confirmed nor denied by historians, Daoism rose around 500 BC. The philosophy originated as a way to end the constant warfare of the period by teaching people of the *Dao* – “the path”. Daoists teach that one must accept the world as it is and to avoid the useless struggles of life while putting in minimal effort to complete a task. “Rather than fight the current, a wise man allows the onrushing waters to pass around him.”



Best described as **passivity**, Daoists believe that the universe is constantly changing and that there is no absolute morality in the world. Daoism teaches that the only thing that matters is the individuals understanding of “the path.”

Each of the three philosophies, Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism, aimed to create order and stability in a time of chaos and uncertainty. Though each approached the issues differently, they all had an enormous impact on Chinese history as a whole.

Social Changes

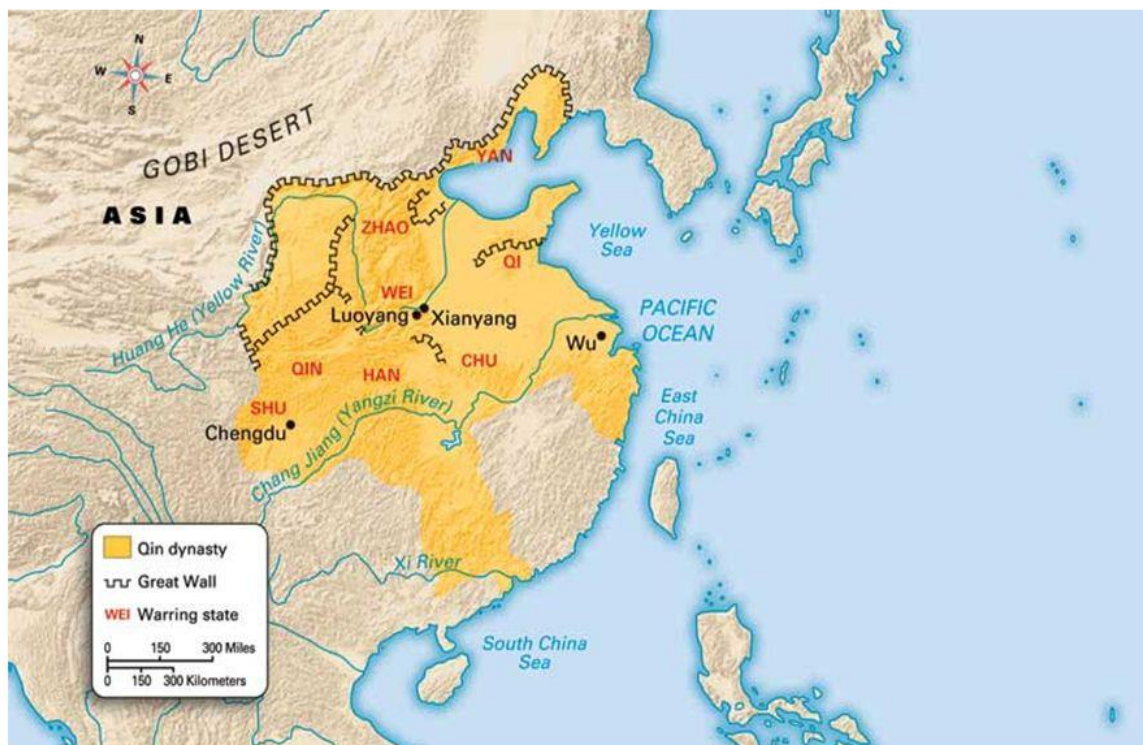
While politics, philosophy, and economies were in constant competition during the Warring States Period, society experienced considerable change as well. Women in particular saw their value drop in society as a result of Confucian ideas.

Though little is known of China prior to writing, individuals like Fuhao demonstrate that women were at the very least capable of assuming power and amassing wealth. As time went on, and especially in the Warring States Period, it was increasingly apparent that the women were treated more as subordinates to men than as equals.

Men stood atop family and therefore social hierarchies in Confucianism, and women were expected be obedient to their fathers first and then their husbands. Arranged and political marriages were widespread in this time period. While men were limited to having one wife, they were still permitted multiple sexual partners of lower status, **concubines**. Men whose wife died had a duty to remarry in order to keep producing male heirs and preserving the cult of ancestors.

Chinese tradition explained the difference of roles in men and women through the concept of **yin** and **yang**. This principle stated that while men and women had different roles, they were complementary and equal in power. The male principle (yang) was like the sun: active, bright, and shining; the female principle (yin) corresponded to the moon: passive, shaded, and reflective. Male toughness, leadership, action, and initiative were balanced by female gentleness, endurance, completeness, and supportiveness. During the Zhou period and with the increasing popularity of Confucianism, what was once viewed as balance and harmonious was replaced by a society in which men were viewed as superior to women.

The Qin Dynasty 221-206 BC



Unification

In a matter of years, the Zhou state of Qin was able to subdue all of its competition and established itself as the new power. The **Qin Dynasty** is often cited as the first Chinese empire and it started a line of subsequent empires that would last until the 20th century.