

The Qin and Han Dynasties

Get Ready to Read!

What's the Connection?

Each of China's early dynasties was led by rulers who were very different. In this section, you will see how the Qin and Han dynasties differed because of their rulers.

Focusing on the Main Ideas

- Qin Shihuangdi used harsh methods to unify and defend China. (page 241)
- Developments during the Han dynasty improved life for all Chinese. (page 244)
- The Silk Road carried Chinese goods as far as Greece and Rome. (page 246)
- Unrest in China helped Buddhism to spread. (page 248)

Locating Places

Guangzhou (GWAHNG•JOH)
 Silk Road
 Luoyang (loo•WOH•YAHNG)

Meeting People

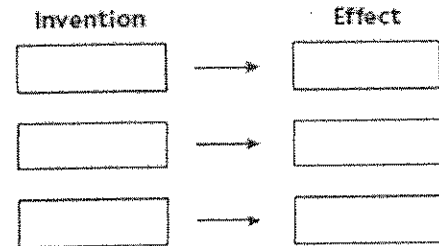
Qin Shihuangdi (CHIHN SHEE•hwahng•dee)
 Liu Bang (lee•OO BAHNG)
 Han Wudi (HAHN WOO•DEE)

Building Your Vocabulary
 acupuncture (A•kyuh•PUHNCK•chuhr)

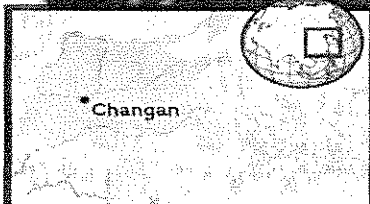
Reading Strategy

Determining Cause and Effect

Complete a diagram like the one below showing the inventions of the Han dynasty and the resulting impact on society.



When & Where?



200 B.C.

- 202 B.C. Liu Bang founds Han dynasty

A.D. 1

- c. A.D. 100 Silk Road established

A.D. 200

- A.D. 190 Rebel armies attack Han capital

Life in Ancient China

Main Idea Chinese society had three main social classes: landowning aristocrats, farmers, and merchants.

Reading Focus Have you heard the terms *high society* and *working class*? They describe social classes in America. Read on to find out about social classes in early China.

A social class includes people who share a similar position in society. Early Chinese society had three main social classes:

- landowning aristocrats
- peasant farmers
- merchants

Classes in Chinese Society China's aristocratic families owned large estates in early China. They lived in large houses with tile roofs, courtyards, and gardens. Fine furniture and silk hangings filled their rooms, and their houses were surrounded by walls to keep out bandits.

The aristocratic families did not own large estates for long. Each aristocrat divided his land among his sons. As a result, sons and grandsons owned much less property than their fathers and grandfathers had owned.

Aristocrats relied on farmers to grow the crops that made them rich. About nine out of ten Chinese were farmers. They lived in simple houses inside village walls. The aristocrats owned the fields outside the village walls. In these fields, farmers in northern China grew wheat and a grain called millet. In the south, where the climate was warmer and wetter, they were able to grow rice.

To pay for the use of the land, the farmers gave part of their crop to the landowners.

Most farmers also owned a small piece of land where they grew food for their family. A typical family ate fish, turnips, beans, wheat or rice, and millet. The farmers had to pay taxes and work one month each year building roads and helping on other big government projects. In wartime, the farmers also served as soldiers.

In Chinese society, farmers ranked above merchants. The merchant social class included shopkeepers, traders, and bankers. The merchants lived in towns and provided goods and services to the landowners.

Many merchants became quite rich, but landowners and farmers still looked down on them. Chinese leaders believed that government officials should not be concerned with money. As a result, merchants were not allowed to have government jobs.

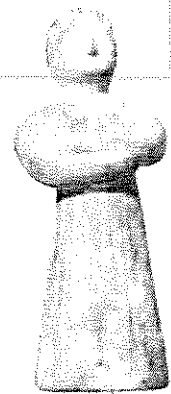
What Was Life Like in a Chinese Family?

The family was the basic building block of Chinese society. Because farming in ancient China required many workers, people had big families to help them produce more and become wealthier. Even the young children of a family worked in the fields. Older sons raised their own crops and provided food for their parents. Chinese families also took care of people in need—the aged, the young, and the sick.

Chinese families practiced filial piety (FIH•lee•uhl PY•uh•tee). This meant that children had to respect their parents and older relatives. Family members placed the needs and desires of the head of the family before their own. The head of the family was the oldest male, usually the father. However, a son could take on this role, and then even his mother had to obey him.

Men and women had very different roles in early China. Men were respected because they grew the crops. They went to school, ran the government, and fought wars. The Chinese considered these jobs more important than the work that women did. Most women raised children and managed the household.

Chinese women could not hold government posts. However, women in the royal court could influence government decisions. Wives of rulers or women in the royal family often convinced men in power to see things their way.



▲ Chinese female figurine

Reading Check Explain Why did the amount of land owned by each aristocrat decrease over time?

Focus on Everyday Life

Chinese Farming Farmers in ancient China had to find ways to grow enough food to feed their large population. It was often difficult because of the dry, mountainous land.

Over centuries, farmers learned to cut terraces—flat areas, like a series of deep steps—into the mountain slopes. Terraces made more land available for farming and kept the soil from eroding, or wearing away. Early farmers also used the terraces as a way to irrigate their crops. As rain fell, it flowed down from one terrace to the



▲ Terrace farming in China

Chinese Village

Chinese farmers lived in small villages made up of several families. They farmed fields outside the village walls.
How did farmers pay for the use of the land they farmed?

Emperor Qin Shihuangdi

Main Idea Qin Shihuangdi used harsh methods to unify and defend China.

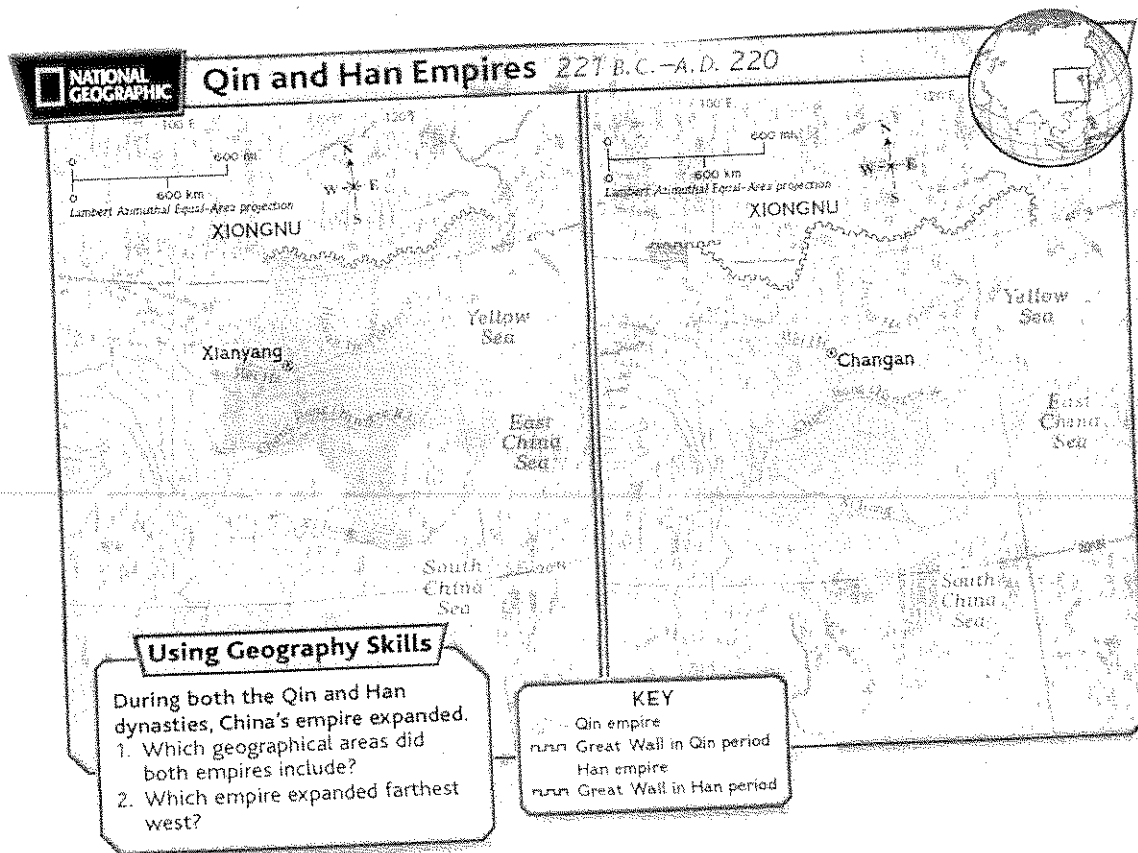
Reading Focus Imagine your city or state without any roads. How would people get from one place to another? Read to find out how a Chinese ruler used roads and canals to unite China.

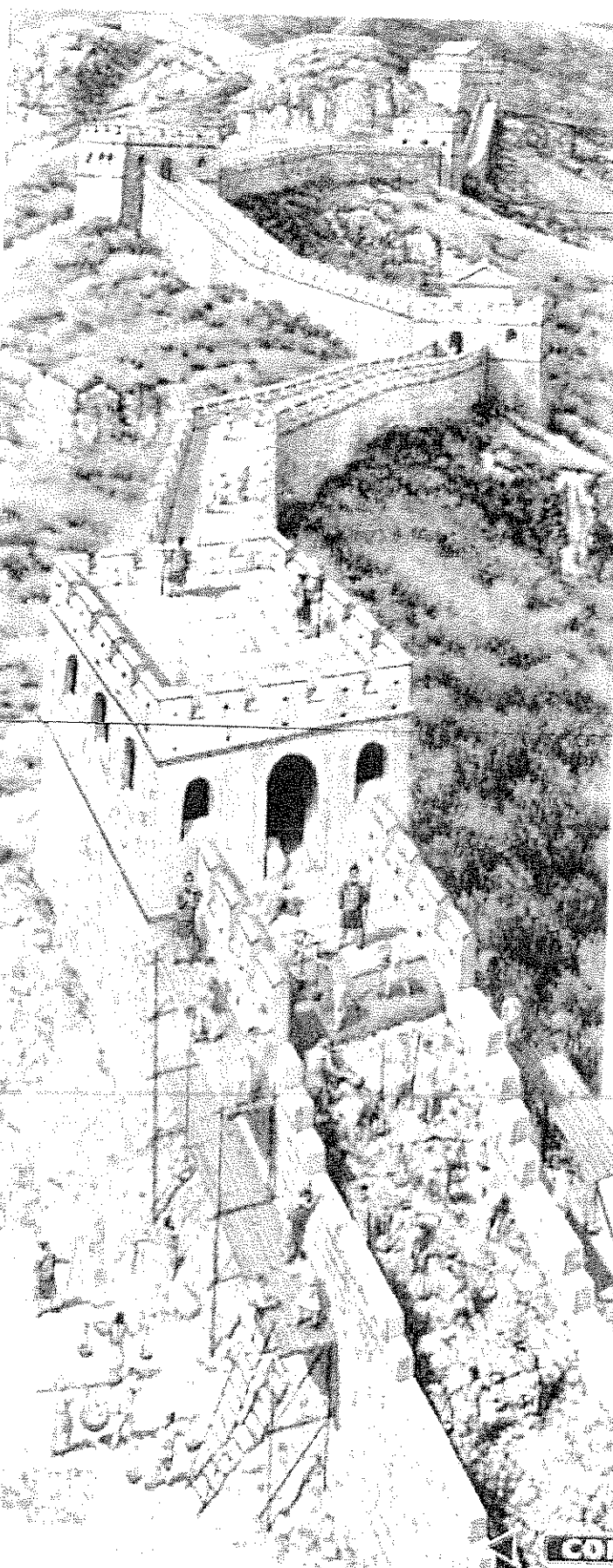
You have read about the problems in China from about 400 B.C. to 200 B.C. The rulers of powerful local states fought one another and ignored the Zhou kings. One of these states was called Qin. Its ruler took over neighboring states one by one. In 221 B.C. the Qin ruler declared himself Qin Shihuangdi (CHIHN SHEE • hwahng • dee),

which means "the First Qin Emperor." The Qin ruler made changes in China's government that would last for 2,000 years.

A Powerful Ruler Qin based his rule on the ideas of Legalism. He had everyone who opposed him punished or killed. Books opposing his views were publicly burned. Qin made the central government stronger than ever before. He appointed government officials, called censors, to make sure government officials did their jobs.

Second in power to the central government were provinces and counties. Under Zhou kings, officials who ran these areas passed on their posts to sons or relatives. Under Qin, only he could fill these posts.





Qin Shihuangdi unified China. He created one currency, or type of money, to be used throughout the empire. He also ordered the building of roads and a huge canal. The canal connected the Chang Jiang in central China to what is today the city of Guangzhou (GWAHNG•JOH) in southern China. He used the canal to ship supplies to his troops in far-off territories.

The Great Wall Northern China was bordered by the vast Gobi. Nomads, people who move from place to place with herds of animals, lived in the Gobi. The Chinese knew them as the Xiongnu (SYEHN•NOO). The Xiongnu were masters at fighting on horseback. They often attacked Chinese farms and villages. Several Chinese rulers in the north built walls to keep out the Xiongnu.

Qin Shihuangdi forced farmers to leave their fields and work on connecting and strengthening the walls. The result was the Great Wall of China, built with stone, sand, and piled rubble. However, Qin did not build the wall that we know today. It was built 1,500 years later.

Why Did People Rebel? Many Chinese viewed Qin Shihuangdi as a cruel leader. Aristocrats were angry because he reduced their power. Scholars hated him for burning their writings. Farmers hated him for forcing them to build roads and the Great Wall. Four years after the emperor died in 210 B.C., the people overthrew his dynasty. Civil war followed, and a new dynasty soon arose.

Read and Think Explain Why did Qin face little opposition during most of his reign?

◀ This artwork shows the Great Wall many years after the reign of Qin Shihuangdi. Most of the wall built by Qin was made of stone and rubble, and was located north of the Great Wall we see today. Little remains of Qin's wall. Who was the wall meant to keep out?

CONTENTS

Biography

QIN SHIHUANGDI

c. 259–210 B.C.

At the age 13, Ying Zheng became the leader of the Chinese state of Qin. The state was already very powerful because of Zheng's father, the previous ruler. Its government and military were well organized. With the help of his generals, young Zheng defeated Qin's six rival states. By 221 B.C., he had united all of the Chinese states under his rule. To mark a new beginning for China and to show his supremacy, Zheng gave himself the title Qin Shihuangdi—"The First Qin Emperor."

Qin Shihuangdi energetically went to work organizing his country. He divided the land into 36 districts, each with its own governor and a representative who reported directly to him. He made laws and taxes uniform throughout the country. He also standardized weights and measurements. Throughout China, the emperor had his achievements inscribed on stone tablets.

Qin Shihuangdi did strengthen and organize China, but many people disliked him because of his harsh laws and punishments. Many people also disliked how he spent lavish amounts of money to build palaces and a gigantic tomb for himself. He had an entire lifelike army—over 6,000 soldiers and horses—built of clay and placed in the tomb.



▲ Qin Shihuangdi

"I have brought order to the mass of beings."

—Qin Shihuangdi



▲ Part of the terra-cotta army found in Qin Shihuangdi's tomb

Then and Now

Why do you think modern historians disagree in their evaluation of Qin Shihuangdi's leadership?

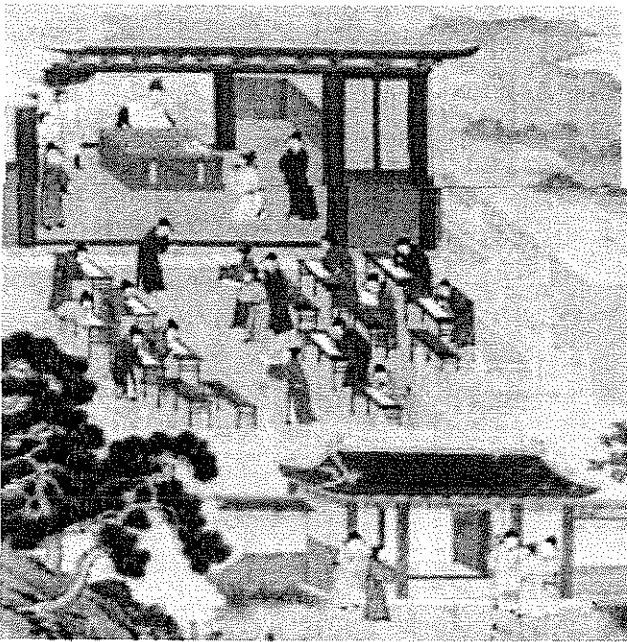
The Han Dynasty

Main Idea Developments during the Han dynasty improved life for all Chinese.

Reading Focus How much time do you spend studying for tests? Find out why some Chinese people spent years studying for one special test.

In 202 B.C. Liu Bang (lee • OO BAHNG) founded the Han dynasty. Liu Bang, who was once a peasant, became a military leader and defeated his rivals. He declared himself Han Gaozu—"Exalted Emperor of Han." Although Han Gaozu threw out the harsh policies of the Qin dynasty, he continued to use censors and also divided the empire into provinces and counties.

What Was the Civil Service? The Han reached its peak under the leadership of Han Wudi (HAHN WOO • DEE), which means "Martial Emperor of Han." He ruled from



▲ This painting shows students taking a civil service examination. Why did the civil service system favor rich job seekers?

141 B.C. to 87 B.C. Because Wudi wanted talented people to fill government posts, job seekers had to take long, difficult tests to qualify for openings in the bureaucracy. Those with the highest scores got the jobs.

In time, Wudi's tests became the civil service examinations. This system for choosing officials remained part of Chinese civilization for 2,000 years. The system was supposed to help anyone with the right skills get a job with the government. However, it actually favored the rich. Only wealthy families could afford to educate their sons for the difficult exams.

Students preparing for these tests learned law, history, and the teachings of Confucius. They began to memorize the works of Confucius at age seven. After many years of schooling, the students took their civil service examinations. Only one in five passed. Those who failed taught school, took jobs as assistants to officials, or were supported by their families.

The Chinese Empire Grows A large bureaucracy was needed to rule the rapidly growing empire. The population had grown from about 20 million under Han Gaozu to more than 60 million under Han Wudi.

Because farmers had to divide their lands among more and more sons, by the middle of the Han Dynasty the average farmer owned only about one acre of land. With so little land, farm families could not raise enough to live. As a result, many sold their land to aristocrats and became tenant farmers. Tenant farmers work on land that is owned by someone else and pay rent in crops. The aristocrats now owned thousands of acres, but peasants remained trapped in poverty.

China's empire grew in size as well as in population. Han armies added lands to the south and pushed Chinese borders westward. The Han dynasty also made the country more secure. After Wudi's armies drove back the Xiongnu—the nomads to the north—the Chinese lived in peace for almost 150 years.

During this period of peace, new forms of Chinese literature appeared. Scholars and historians wrote new histories of current events and made copies of old literature. The focus of art also changed during the Han dynasty. Wealthy families commissioned products made of the best quality silk and wall carvings featuring scenes of everyday life.

An Era of Inventions New inventions during the Han dynasty helped Chinese workers produce more than ever. Millers used newly invented waterwheels to grind more grain, and miners used new iron drill bits to mine more salt. Ironworkers invented steel. Paper, another Han invention, was used by government officials to record a growing amount of information.

Chinese medicine also improved under the Han. Doctors discovered that certain foods prevented disease. They used herbs to cure illnesses and eased pain by sticking thin needles into patients' skin. This treatment is known as acupuncture (A•kyuh•PUHNGK•chuh).

The Chinese also invented the rudder and a new way to move the sails of ships. These changes allowed ships to sail into the wind for the first time. Chinese merchant ships could now travel to the islands of Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean. As a result, China established trade as far away as India and the Mediterranean Sea.

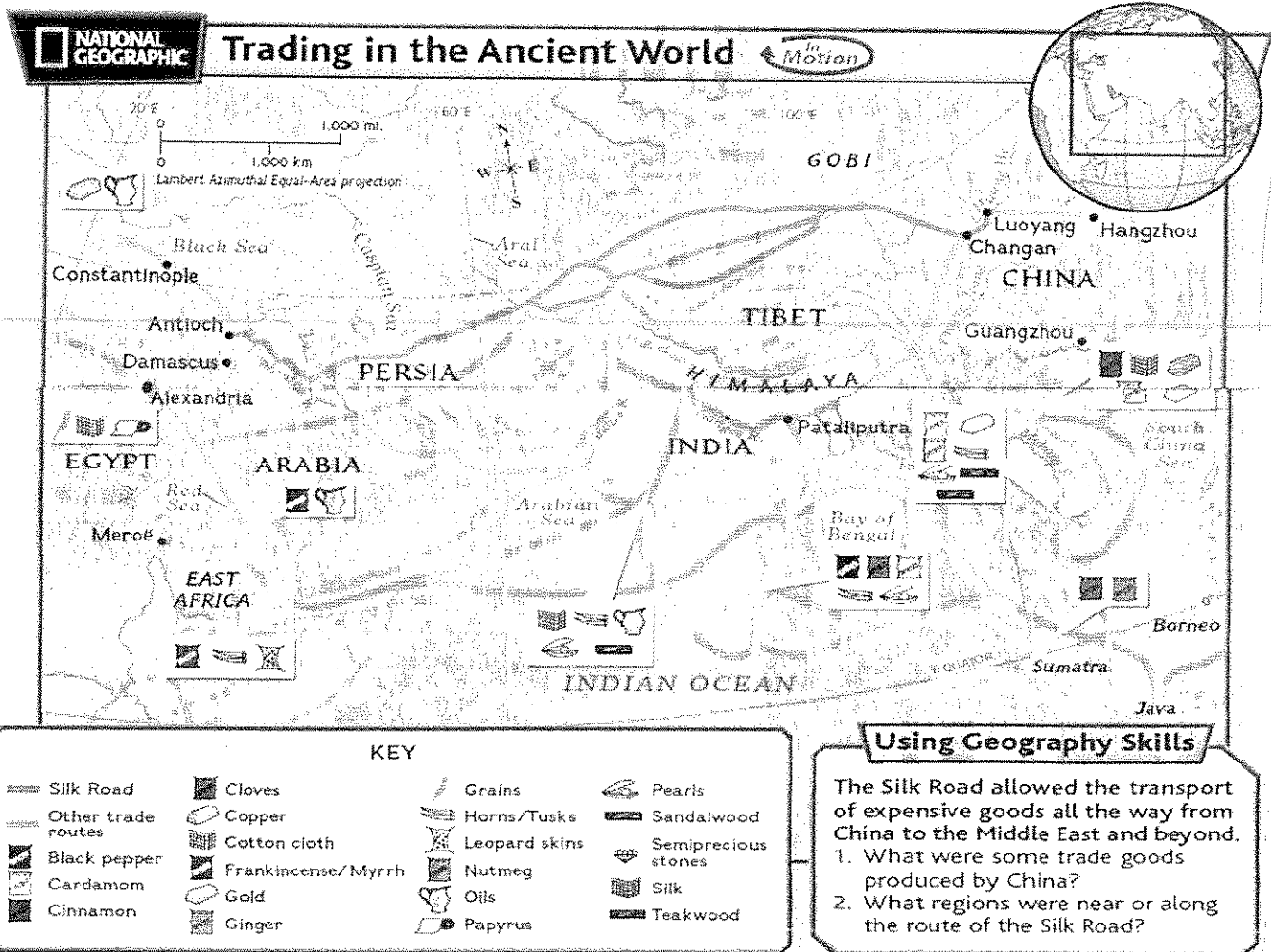
Reading Check Explain How did China's empire increase in size during the Han dynasty?

The Silk Road

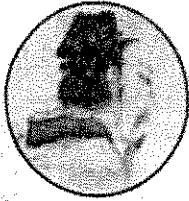


Main Idea The Silk Road carried Chinese goods as far as Greece and Rome.

Reading Focus Many of the things we buy today are made in China. Read to learn how goods made in China long ago made it all the way to Europe.

Emperor Han Wudi ordered a general named Zhang Qian (JAHNG CHYEHN) to explore areas west of China. Zhang was sent on this mission to find allies for China against its enemies, especially the Xiongnu



Four Chinese Dynasties

	SHANG	ZHOU	QIN	HAN
When	1750–1045 B.C.	1045–256 B.C.	221–206 B.C.	202 B.C.–A.D. 220
Important Leaders	Numerous kings with large armies and control over the land; ruled from capital city of Anyang	 Wu	 Qin Shihuangdi	 Liu Bang
Main Ideas and Accomplishments	Developed social classes that included farmers, merchants, aristocrats, and royal family	Longest-lasting dynasty in Chinese history; established Mandate of Heaven	Strengthened central government; created single monetary system	Population and landmass grew under Han; opened China to trade and commerce by building Silk Road
Influences on Chinese Culture	Influenced Chinese religion and culture; created Chinese written language	Developed irrigation and flood-control systems to help farmers grow more crops	Introduced use of censors to check on government officials; Qin built the first Great Wall to keep out invaders	Created government's civil service examination; major inventions: steel, paper, acupuncture, advanced sea travel.

Understanding Charts

The four dynasties of early China were separated by brief periods of unrest.

1. Under which dynasty was a single monetary system put in place?
2. Evaluate Which dynasty do you think contributed the most to Chinese culture? Why?

to the north. After a journey of about 13 years, Zhang returned to China. He failed to find allies, but he told of a mighty empire to the west with large cities full of people "who cut their hair short, wear embroidered clothes, and ride in very small chariots." Zhang was describing the Roman Empire. He had also discovered another kingdom, perhaps in Kazakhstan, where there were horses of exceptional strength and size.

Emperor Wudi was delighted to hear this because the cavalry of the Xiongnu gave them a great advantage over his army, which was mostly infantry. The emperor

encouraged trade to get these horses. The result was the **Silk Road**, a large network of trade routes stretching 4,000 miles (6,436 km) from western China to southwest Asia.

Merchants used camels to carry their goods across deserts and mountains to central Asia. From there Arabs carried the goods to the Mediterranean Sea. The trip over the Silk Road was expensive because it was difficult and dangerous. Merchants had to pay taxes to many kingdoms as they moved the goods east and west. For this reason, they carried only high-priced goods such as silk, spices, tea, and porcelain.

Conclude Why were only expensive goods carried along the Silk Road?

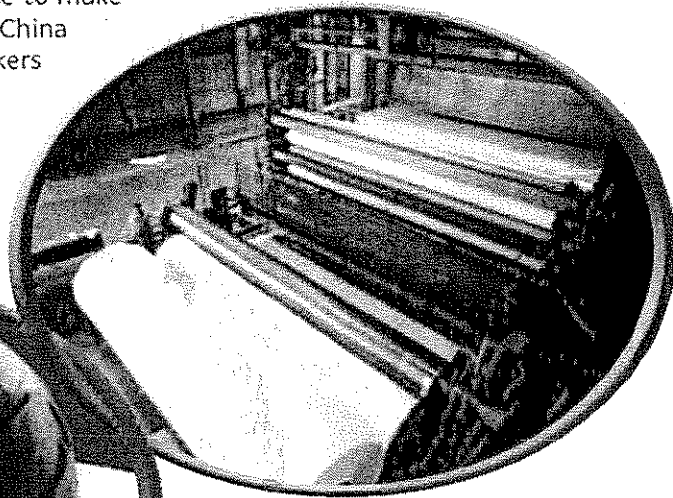
Linking Past & Present

Papermaking

THEN The Chinese were the first people to make paper. The oldest piece of paper found in China dates from the first century B.C. Papermakers soaked tree bark, hemp, and rags in water and pounded it into pulp. They lowered a bamboo screen into a vat of the pulp and then lifted it out. It held a thin sheet of pulp which dried into a single sheet of paper.



▼ Modern papermaking



NOW Papermaking today is a huge international industry. Most paper is made in paper mills by machines, but the basic process is the same. Instead of tree bark, rags, and hemp, most paper today is made from wood pulp. *Why do you think some modern artists continue to make paper using pulp and a frame?*

Major Changes in China

Main Idea Unrest in China helped Buddhism to spread.

Reading Focus What do you do when you feel frightened or unsafe? Read to find out how those feelings triggered the spread of Buddhism from India to China.

As you read in Chapter 6, Buddhism began in India, but it soon spread to other countries as well. Merchants and teachers from India brought Buddhism to China during the A.D. 100s. At first, only a few merchants and scholars were interested in the new religion. In time, however, Buddhism became very popular. One of the most important reasons that the Chinese people began to believe in Buddhism was the fall of the Han dynasty.

The Han emperors after Wudi were weak and foolish. As a result, the central government lost respect and power. At the

same time, as you read earlier, the aristocrats began grabbing more land and wealth. Dishonest officials and greedy aristocrats caused unrest among the farmers.

Wars, rebellions, and plots against the emperor put an end to the Han dynasty. In A.D. 190 a rebel army attacked the Han capital, Luoyang (loo•WOH•YAHNG). By A.D. 220, China had plunged into civil war. To make the situation worse, the northern nomads invaded the country.

The collapse of the government and the beginning of the civil war frightened many Chinese. They felt unsafe. Buddhist ideas helped people cope with the stress and their fear. Even the followers of other religions found Buddhism attractive. Followers of Confucius and Daoists admired Buddhist ideas. By the 400s, Buddhism had become popular in China.

Reading Check Identify What groups in China were the first to adopt Buddhism?