

Chapter 1 : Chinese writing | racedaydvl.com

It was a golden age of Chinese civilization and considered to be the most prosperous period of China with significant developments in culture, art, literature, particularly poetry, and technology. Buddhism became the predominant religion for the common people.

The Chinese writing system is non-alphabetic. It applies a specific character to write each meaningful syllable or each nonmeaningful syllabic that is part of a polysyllabic word. History It is not known when Chinese writing originated, but it apparently began to develop in the early 2nd millennium bc. The earliest known inscriptions, each of which contains between 10 and 60 characters incised on pieces of bone and tortoiseshell that were used for oracular divination, date from the Shang or Yin dynasty 18th–12th century bc, but, by then it was already a highly developed system, essentially similar to its present form. By bc the script included some 2, to 3, characters, most of which can be read to this day. By the end of the Zhou dynasty the dazhuan had degenerated to some extent. The script was fixed in its present form during the Qin period 221–206 bc. The earliest graphs were schematic pictures of what they represented; the graph for man resembled a standing figure, that for woman depicted a kneeling figure. It is now recognized that the system represents the Chinese language by means of a logographic script. Each graph or character corresponds to one meaningful unit of the language, not directly to a unit of thought. Although it was possible to make up simple signs to represent common objects, many words were not readily picturable. To represent such words the phonographic principle was adopted. A graph that pictured some object was borrowed to write a different word that happened to sound similar. With this invention the Chinese approached the form of writing invented by the Sumerians. However, because of the enormous number of Chinese words that sound the same, to have carried through the phonographic principle would have resulted in a writing system in which many of the words could be read in more than one way. That is, a written character would be extremely ambiguous. The solution to the problem of character ambiguity, adopted about bc during the reign of the first Qin emperor, Shihuangdi, was to distinguish two words having the same sound and represented by the same graph by adding another graph to give a clue to the meaning of the particular word intended. Such complex graphs or characters consist of two parts, one part suggesting the sound, the other part the meaning. The system was then standardized so as to approach the ideal of one distinctive graph representing each morpheme, or unit of meaning, in the language. The limitation is that a language that has thousands of morphemes would require thousands of characters, and, as the characters are formed from simple lines in various orientations and arrangements, they came to possess great complexity. Not only did the principle of the script change with time, so too did the form of the graphs. The earliest writing consisted of carved inscriptions. Before the beginning of the Christian Era the script came to be written with brush and ink on paper. The brushwork allowed a great deal of scope for aesthetic considerations. The relation between the written Chinese language and its oral form is very different from the analogous relation between written and spoken English. A piece of written text read orally is often quite incomprehensible to a listener because of the large number of homophones. In conversation, literate Chinese speakers frequently draw characters in the air to distinguish between homophones. Written text, on the other hand, is completely unambiguous. In English, by contrast, writing is often thought of as a reflection, albeit imperfect, of speech. To make the script easier to read, a system of transcribing Chinese into the Roman alphabet was adopted in 1852. The system was not intended to replace the logographic script but to indicate the sounds of graphs in dictionaries and to supplement graphs on such things as road signs and posters. A second reform simplified the characters by reducing the number of strokes used in writing them. Simplification, however, tends to make the characters more similar in appearance; thus they are more easily confused and the value of the reform is limited. The phonetic element is usually a contracted form of another character with the same pronunciation as that of the word intended. Chinese script, as mentioned above, is logographic; it differs from phonographic writing systems whose characters or graphs represent units of sound in using one character or graph to represent a morpheme. Chinese, like any other language, has thousands of morphemes, and, as one character is used for each morpheme, the writing system has thousands of characters. Two

morphemes that sound the same would, in English, have at least some similarity of spelling; in Chinese they are represented by completely different characters. Yet there is no similarity in the way they are written. The Chinese language has clearly distinguished syllables that are easily recognized in speech and hence easily represented by a sign. These syllables correspond to morphemes; each morpheme is one syllable long. In English one morpheme is often expressed by two syllables e. In Chinese, with a general correspondence between morpheme and syllable, each morpheme is easily represented by a sign for the corresponding syllable. Moreover, one morpheme in Chinese is more or less equivalent to a word. Unlike English, in which morphemes combine to make new words e. Similarly, the pronunciation of a syllable is relatively uninfluenced by adjacent syllables, which, therefore, remain relatively invariant. It is these invariant units of sound and meaning that are represented by distinctive logographs. With the adoption of the brush as the tool and of ink on paper as the medium for writing, graphs became essentially arbitrary, involving simple lines and shapes. The basic stock of characters are simple graphs, some of which represent the names for objects or parts of objects, such as river, fish, man, and woman, and others of which stand for more abstract terms, such as yield, love, quarrel, prince, and the like. There are approximately 1, of these simple characters or graphs. These basic motivated characters serve two other roles. First, they may double as loanwords. Thus, the character representing the word prince doubles for thin-sliced, law, beating the breast, avoid, and others that were difficult to depict directly. The principle for borrowing the character was that the new word be pronounced in the same or a similar way as the word represented by the character. This acrophonic principle played a similar role in the development of hieroglyphic and cuneiform writing. Indeed, it has been suggested that if this principle had been applied consistently, the Chinese would have ended up with a syllabic rather than a logographic system. However, the writing system would then have been extremely ambiguous, with one character representing a dozen or more unrelated words as a consequence of the extreme homophony of the Chinese language. The logographic principle eliminates that ambiguity by providing one character for one meaning. The second use of the basic characters was in combination with other characters to make up complex characters. Complex characters consist of one graph representing the pronunciation of the character— that is, a graph standing for a set of similar sounding words based on the acrophonic principle combined with a second graph indicating the semantic category of the word. One part represents the sound of the syllable, the other the semantic category of the morpheme; e. The process of combining simple graphs to make complex ones is enormously prolific and has generated thousands of unique characters capable of representing the morphemes of the language. With some 40, graphs, the system comes close to the ideal of a fully explicit writing system that represents each distinctive unit of meaning with a distinctive unit of writing. But, of course, such a large number of graphs imposes a major obstacle to learning to read and write. The problem is intensified by the fact that neither the sound property nor the semantic property of the characters is of much help in the recognition of a character. Because of changes in pronunciation of the language, the complex signs no longer reflect the sound pattern that they originally grew out of. Similarly, the semantic relations represented by the graph are no longer so clear. Consequently, as the relations between the characters and what they represent are largely unknown to readers and writers of the language, the graphs are seen as groups of lines and angles that make up repeated visual units, just as readers of English recognize whole words without analyzing them into their constituent letters. A literate Chinese person knows perhaps 4, of the most important characters. Chinese characters are arranged in dictionaries according to the radicals of which they are composed or with which they are traditionally associated. The radicals are arranged in modern dictionaries according to the number of strokes used in writing them. Assessment Most scholars now believe that neither the logographic Chinese writing system nor the alphabetic Indo-European writing system possesses any overall advantage. The Chinese writing system requires more memorization, while the Latin alphabet requires more analysis and synthesis; both appear to be relatively optimal devices for the transcription of their respective, very different, languages. For the Chinese, a single logographic system is particularly useful because it is capable of representing very different spoken forms, just as the numerals 1, 2, and 3 are understandable across many regions though they represent different words in different languages. In this manner Chinese logographs form a common medium of communication for a vast country because they can be

read by people who speak mutually incomprehensible dialects or languages. Since the communist revolution the grammar and vocabulary of modern Mandarin Chinese has served as the standard written language.

Chapter 2 : Beginning of Chinese civilization –“ Window into China

*The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization (Chinese Edition) [Li Chi] on racedaydvl.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Anthology of archaeological and anthropological writing by Li Chi in English, the founding father of China's modern archaeology; Trace back the rise of Chinese civilization as well as the origin of its people following the steps of the pioneering researchers of this land; Brief.*

East Asia is similar to South Asia because rugged mountains and hazardous deserts create a deadly barrier to foreigners. For thousands of years, East Asian people were isolated from the rest of the world—this allowed them to develop their culture in a very unique way. The Himalaya Mountains are the southern border between China and India. Like the Himalaya Mountains, the Plateau of Tibet was also formed by the slow crash of the Indian subcontinent into Asia. Another Mountain range in western China is the Tian Shan. East Asia also has dry areas. The Gobi Desert is found along the border between Mongolia and China. The Gobi is the 5th largest desert in the world and is also the coldest. It is common to see frost or even snow on the sand and gravel dunes. A rain shadow is a dry area on the leeward opposite of windward side of a mountainous area. The mountains block rain-producing weather and cast a "shadow" of dryness behind them. The Taklimakan Desert is found in the dry west. It is framed by the Kunlun to the south and the Tian Shan to the north. There is very little water in the Taklimakan and crossing it is extremely hazardous. The mountains and deserts have played an important role in Asian history since they created natural barriers to outsiders. Despite the dry and mountainous terrain of East Asia, there are some low plains suitable for early civilization. Alluvial means its made of rich soil deposited by a flooding river. The North China Plain is the main area where farming is done in China. The main food grown in China is rice. Since rice produces more food per acre than wheat, it can support a much higher population. Heavy summer rains and snowmelt support 2 large river systems in East Asia. The Huang He or Yellow River is the 6th longest river in the world. It is called the Yellow River because the water picks up yellowish loess or silt from the western half of the river pictured on right. The river is known for the amount of silt or small pieces of dirt it carries. Geographers estimate about 1. East Asia has many different climate types. Another thing that effects the precipitation in East Asia is monsoon winds. Similar to South Asia, the summer monsoon brings heavy rain and the winter monsoon is very dry. More than two-thirds of China is covered in mountains and deserts. Arable land or land that can be farmed is an important resource. Only about 14 percent of China can be farmed. Early History Humans probably reached East Asia between 30, and 50, years ago. Recently, pieces of clay pottery have been discovered in a Chinese hunter-gatherer cave that dates back to 18, years ago—this is the oldest pottery ever discovered pictured left. Historians believe farming began in China about 7, BCE. The first crop grown was a grain called millet. Rice was farmed around the same time, and may have come before millet. Farming created more food, which increased population and allowed people to do different jobs besides constantly looking for food. Eventually, people needed leaders to organize irrigation and store food. Families that controlled land and irrigation became powerful. China was home to one of the four early civilizations found around the world. However, China is different from the other civilizations. The culture that developed in Ancient China became the nation of China that exists today. Of course there have been changes along the way, but the same culture has continued. The other three civilizations have faded away or been completely overtaken by new people. For this reason, people say China is the oldest continuous civilization in the world. In China, the powerful families that controlled land became leaders of family-controlled governments called dynasties. Chinese history from ancient times until about years ago is divided by different dynasties. It lasted around years and included the reigns of 17 emperors--an emperor is similar to a king. The Xia people were farmers, with bronze weapons and clay pottery. One artifact called a "bi" pictured on right seems to be a burial artifact. Silk is one of the most important products China has ever created. Most historians agree that the Xia Dynasty was producing silk clothing, though silk production may have started much earlier. Silk is made by unraveling the cocoons of Silk Worms. Each cocoon is made from a single silk thread. Not all historians agree that the Xia was a real dynasty. A clan is group of very close families that are often viewed as one big family. The Shang conquered

Xia land and gained control of Chinese civilization. The Shang Dynasty lasted over years and was led by 30 different emperors. The Shang were the oldest Chinese civilization to leave behind written records, called oracle bones—turtle shells, cattle shoulders or other bones on which were written important clues to Chinese history. They would then heat the bone until it cracked. The crack lines would reveal the wishes of the gods--this process of learning what the gods want is called divination. During the Shang Dynasty people worshipped many gods. Ancestor worship was very important since they believed their family members became god-like in the after life. Shang government invented new ways to make bronze crafts. Thousands of bronze artifacts have been found including some that weigh nearly pounds. Its important to understand that other smaller cultures existed in the same time as the Shang in different parts of China, but the Shang left written records and seem to be the most advanced. Eventually, the Shang were defeated by the Zhou clan. The Zhou time period is divided into parts called the Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou because there was a brief disruption in their control of the government. The Zhou battled with invading armies from the north Mongolians , so they built large mounds of dirt and rock as barriers that would slow down the enemy--this was not the Great Wall yet, but the idea came before the wall. The crossbow was another invention of this time--it was extremely effective and feared by enemies. Iron tipped weapons were much stronger, and the iron plow helped to increase food production. Agriculture was usually directed by the government. They allowed peasants to farm the land similar to the feudal system that developed in Europe in the Middle Ages. The individual farmers kept the square of grain in the surrounding squares and worked the middle square together. This allowed the government to store extra food in case disaster struck. During the Zhou Dynasty Taoism also spelled Daoism and Confucianism developed—the two most important Chinese philosophies. The great Chinese philosopher Confucius developed a way of life called Confucianism. Confucianism says that all people can be taught and improved if they do the right things. Confucianism is still important today, but it did not become widely followed in China until the Han Dynasty. The founder of Taoism was named Laozi. Taoism is all about following the "Tao", which means the "way" or "path". The Tao is the driving force behind all things in the universe. The Yin Yang symbol is usually associated with Taoism. The power of the emperor was also related to religious beliefs. Things that proved the ruling family had lost the Mandate of Heaven were natural disasters and rebellions. The states rebelled and fought one another in a series of brutal wars, which began a period of over years of war called the Warring States Period. Eventually, one family Qin united all others into one empire. This is usually recognized as the first empire of China, which begins a new time period called Imperial China. Imperial basically means "empire of". The brutal leader Qin Shi Huang declared himself the first true emperor of China. This dynasty designed standard currency money , standard wheel axle size to make roads all one size , and standard laws that applied to the entire empire. Standardize means to make the same. The Qin also standardized the different systems of writing into one system called small seal script that much of China still uses today. Qin Shi Huang enforced a philosophy called Legalism that focuses on people following laws and taking instructions from the government. However, many followers of Confucianism were more loyal to their family and other Confucian traditions. To silence their protests, the emperor banished or put to death many Confucian teachers and burned their Confucian books. At one point Qin Shi Huang killed Confucian teachers by burying them alive! Mongolian invasions from the north were a constant problem in China. The Qin government ordered walls built in the past to be connected to make a larger and stronger wall.

Chapter 3 : A Brief History Of Chinese Civilization - racedaydvl.com

China is an East Asian country with a large territory, a huge population and an ancient history. With written records dating back 4, years, it is recognized as one of the four great ancient.

During this period of Egyptian history the Pharaohs were absolute rulers. The Old Kingdom failed at around BC for a number of reasons. These included the long life span of Pepi II, who ruled 94 years. Pepi II lived to be about years of age, outliving many of his heirs. Additionally, the lower Nile inundation became irregular and led to failed harvests, which may have been caused by a drier climate. The First Intermediate Period[edit] Monarches competed for control of Egypt and civil wars were common. Famines were common during this period and it is called the dark age of Egyptian History. It lasted from BC. The Pharaohs period of this period called themselves good shepherds and they were not as powerful as they were during the Old Kingdom. Their pyramids were smaller. The Middle Kingdom ended because of weak Pharaohs and an invasion by Asiatic people called the Hyksos. This period lasted from BC. Later his son Tutankhamen restored the old religion, Tutankhamen died at 18 leaving no heirs to the throne. He ruled for 67 years. He protected Egypt from invasion. About BC the New Kingdom ended. These semi-nomadic peoples domesticated wheat, barley, sheep, goat and cattle. Pottery was in use by the 6th millennium BC. Their settlement consisted of mud buildings that housed four internal subdivisions. Burials included elaborate goods such as baskets, stone and bone tools, beads, bangles, pendants and occasionally animal sacrifices. Figurines and ornaments of sea shell, limestone, turquoise, lapis lazuli, sandstone and polished copper have been found. By the 4th millennium BC we find much evidence of manufacturing. Technologies included stone and copper drills, updraft kilns, large pit kilns and copper melting crucibles. Button seals included geometric designs. Indus Valley civilization[edit] By BC a pre-Harappan culture emerged, with trade networks including lapis lazuli and other raw materials. Villagers domesticated numerous other crops, including peas, sesame seed, dates, and cotton, plus a wide range of domestic animals, including the water buffalo which still remains essential to intensive agricultural production throughout Asia today. There is also evidence of sea-going craft. Judging from the dispersal of artifacts the trade networks integrated portions of Afghanistan, the Persian coast, northern and central India, Mesopotamia see Meluhha and Ancient Egypt see Silk Road. Archaeologists studying the remains of two men from Mehrgarh, Pakistan, discovered that these peoples in the Indus Valley Civilization had knowledge of medicine and dentistry as early as circa BC. The Indus Valley Civilization gains credit for the earliest known use of decimal fractions in a uniform system of ancient weights and measures, as well as negative numbers see Timeline of mathematics. The Indus Valley Civilization boasts the earliest known accounts of urban planning. Evidence suggests efficient municipal governments. Streets were laid out in perfect grid patterns comparable to modern New York. Houses were protected from noise, odors and thieves. The sewage and drainage systems developed and used in cities throughout the Indus Valley were far more advanced than that of contemporary urban sites in Mesopotamia. The exact connection of the genesis of this civilization with the Indus Valley civilization on one hand, and a possible Indo-Aryan migration on the other hand, is the subject of disputes. Early Vedic society was largely pastoral. Later on, the society became agricultural, and was organized around four Varnas, or classes. Several small kingdoms and tribes merged to form a few large ones which were often at war with each other. In addition to the principle texts of Hinduism, the Vedas , the great Indian epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the latter of which constitutes the longest poem in the world, are said to have been first written during this period, perhaps from a longer spoken tradition of unwritten recitation. The Bhagavad Gita, another primary text of Hinduism, is contained within the Mahabharata. Early Indo-Aryan presence probably corresponds to the presence of ochre coloured pottery, archaeologically. The kingdom of the Kurus marks flowering of the Vedic civilization, corresponding to the Black and Red Ware and the beginning of the Iron Age in Northern India begins, around BC, likely also contemporary with the composition of the Atharvaveda. Painted Grey Ware spread over all of Northern India marks the late Vedic period, corresponding to a wave of urbanization occurred across the Indian sub-continent, spreading from Afghanistan to Bengal, in the 7th century BC. A number of kingdoms and republics emerged across the

Indo-Gangetic plain and southern India during this period. The Mahajanapadas[edit] By BC, sixteen hereditary monarchies known as the Mahajanapadas stretched across the Indo-Gangetic plains from modern-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh. The largest of these nations were Magadha, Kosala, Kuru and Gandhara. The right of a king to his throne, no matter how it was gained, was usually legitimized through religious right and genealogies concocted by priests who ascribed to the king divine origins. Hindu rituals at that time were complicated and conducted by the priestly class. It is thought that the Upanishads, the secondary texts of ancient Hinduism, dealing mainly with philosophy, were first composed early in this period. The court language at that time was Sanskrit, while the dialects of the general population of northern India were referred to as Prakrits. In BC, Gautama Buddha gained enlightenment and thus founded Buddhism, which was initially intended as a supplement to the existing Hindu Vedic dharma. Around the same time period, in mid-6th century BC, Mahavira founded Jainism. Both religions had a simple doctrine and were preached in Prakrit which helped it gain acceptance by the masses. Though the Persians made Taxila the capital, their influence was marginal and governed the region for around years. However, costly campaigns against the forces of Porus also known as Puru , and the tired troops forced him to retreat to his empire after reaching the Beas River in Punjab. He appointed Greek governors to rule the newly acquired province to keep open trade routes between India and Greece. Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara, who expanded the kingdom over most of present day India, barring the extreme south and east. During this time, most of the subcontinent was united under a single government for the first time. The kingdom was inherited by his son Ashoka the Great who initially sought to expand his kingdom. In the aftermath of the carnage caused in the invasion of Kalinga, he renounced bloodshed and pursued a policy of non-violence or ahimsa after converting to Buddhism. The Mauryan dynasty under Ashoka was responsible for the proliferation of Buddhist ideals across the whole of East Asia and South East Asia, fundamentally altering the history and development of Asia. Ashoka the Great has been described as one of the greatest rulers the world has seen. Puyamitra Sunga then ascended the throne. These rulers were legendary sage-kings and moral exemplars, and one of them, the Yellow Emperor, is sometimes said to be the ancestor of all Chinese people. Following this period Sima Qian relates that a system of inherited rulership was established during the Xia dynasty, and that this model was perpetuated in the successor Shang and Zhou dynasties. It is during this period of the Three Dynasties Chinese: Some archaeologists connect the Xia to excavations at Erlitou in central Henan province, where a bronze smelter from around BC was unearthed. Early markings from this period, found on pottery and shells, have been alleged to be ancestors of modern Chinese characters, but such claims are unsupported. With no clear written records to match the Shang oracle bones or the Zhou bronze vessel writings, the Xia remains poorly understood. The first, from the earlier Shang period ca. The second set, from the later Shang or Yin period, consists of a large body of oracle bone writings. Anyang in modern day Henan has been confirmed as the last of the six capitals of the Shang ca. Chinese historians living in later periods were accustomed to the notion of one dynasty succeeding another, but the actual political situation in early China is known to have been much more complicated. Hence, as some scholars of China suggest, the Xia and the Shang can possibly refer to political entities that existed at the same time, just as the early Zhou successor state of the Shang , is known to have existed at the same time as the Shang. What was the religion? The Zhou appeared to have begun their rule under a semi-feudal system. Nevertheless, power became decentralized during the Spring and Autumn Period when regional feudal lords began to assert their power, absorb smaller powers, and vie for hegemony. The Hundred Schools of Thought of Chinese philosophy blossomed during this period and such influential intellectual movements as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and Mohism were founded. After further political consolidation, seven prominent states remained by the end of 5th century BC, and the years in which these few states battled each other is known as the Warring States period. Though there remained a nominal Zhou king until BC, he was largely a figurehead and held little real power. The final expansion in this period began during the reign of Ying Zheng, the king of Qin. The Hittites[edit] The Hittites were the precursors of the Caucasian Kartvelian group of nations and were the descendants of Sumerians. Their innovations in the design of chariots, moving the wheel to the centre from the back, gave them a military advantage over other civilizations. Another point of note is that the first international peace treaty was signed

by the Hittites and the Egyptians after the Battle of Kadesh. The original copy is kept in the headquarters of the United Nations. After years as a major empire in the Ancient Middle East the Hittites, crippled by the attacks of the Sea Peoples abandoned their capital, Hattusa, and seemed to vanish from history. The Assyrians eventually grew to occupy modern-day Iraq, northern Egypt, the eastern parts of Asia Minor and modern-day Jordan. Assyria started around BC with Semitic barbarians invading the area and establishing the roots for a civilization. By BC the Assyrians had firm control over most of northern Mesopotamia, but later lost it to the Babylonians. By BC, the Assyrians reached the Mediterranean coast. The Empire reached its peak at around to BC, with the conquering of northern Egypt and Babylon. By BC, their capital, Nineveh, fell to the revolting vassal states, including Babylon. Soon after, the Assyrians existed only in the history books. Though the Assyrians did not advance far in the fields of science and technology, philosophy or the arts, they were mentioned in Biblical records for being great warriors, and their tactics of war would influence later powers, such as the Persians. The empire eventually became the largest empire of the ancient world. Persepolis was the ceremonial capitol of Persia. Susa and Pasargadas also acted as capital cities at different times in Persian history. They were all in what is now Iran.

Chapter 4 : Ancient China - Ancient Civilizations for Kids

Chinese civilization begins, according to records, with the creation of the Xia dynasty in BC. Although the Xia dynasty was the first 'civilization' in China, there were people who lived on the land well before Yu the Great established the Xia dynasty over

China is an East Asian country with a large territory, a huge population and an ancient history. With written records dating back 4, years, it is recognized as one of the four great ancient civilizations of the world, together with ancient Egypt, Babylon and India. Moreover, it is the only ancient civilization that has continued to this very day. China was one of the cradles of the human race. The Chinese nation is not only the most populous but also one of the oldest in the world. Fossils that have been found in Chinese territory include those of Yuanmou Man, the first Homo erectus, who lived 1. The fossils of Shu Ape, a primate that lived 45 million years ago, which is known as the "first anthropoid", were discovered in China in The first light of Chinese civilization revealed itself 7, to 8, years ago, as indicated by the ruins of the Daxi Culture in Sichuan and Hubei provinces, the Majiapang Culture in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, the Hemudu Culture in eastern Zhejiang and the Yangshou Culture along the middle reaches of the Yellow River and its main tributaries. According to legend, the primitive tribes that inhabited the middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River were unified into two powerful tribes under the Yellow Emperor and Fiery Emperor, and began their push southward 5, years ago. After years of warfare, they conquered the Sanmiao and Jiuli tribes active in south China under the leadership of Chi You. Part of the defeated tribe was incorporated into the tribes under the Yellow and Fiery emperors to become a component part of the Han people, which marked the beginning of the Chinese nation. This history has also given rise to the term "descendants of the Yellow and Fiery emperors" that Chinese often use to refer to themselves. Archaeological studies have revealed that around 5, years ago the Chinese entered the stage of patriarchal society. Not only did villages begin to appear but also the initial forms of cities began to become evident. Extensive communities indicated that the population at the time had already reached a fairly large size and agriculture had made great headway. The earliest discoveries took place during this period. Shen Nong tried and tasted various kinds of wild plants to select crops appropriate to be cultivated for food and herbal medicine to cure disease. The Yellow Emperor invented the compass, which helped him defeat Chi You. More importantly, the appearance of chariots greatly reduced labor intensity. Lei Su, wife of the Yellow Emperor, discovered silk making by raising silkworms, and produced the first garments, which allowed the ancient people to bid goodbye to the period when they wore animal skins and tree leaves. The tribe under Chi You in the south learned how to make weapons with copper, creating the conditions for making bronze vessels, metallurgy and alchemy of later times. During the Xia Dynasty, 4, years ago, China entered the period of slave society. The Shang Dynasty th centuries BC , which replaced the Xia, saw the height of bronze culture, when superb smelting and casting techniques brought forth beautiful wares made of bronze. Pottery making also developed very rapidly with the appearance of primitive pottery wares. Sericulture and silk weaving reached maturity at this time. From BC to the end of the 19th century, China went through a long feudal period. Before the 15th century, China was one of the most powerful countries in the world, occupying a leading position in the development of productivity and technology. Ancient China enjoyed a developed agriculture and advanced irrigation system, an independent tradition of medicine and advanced botanical knowledge. Besides, China was rich in ceramics and silk textiles which were great inventions that exerted a great impact worldwide. The first people to take note of such astronomical phenomena as comets, sunspots and new stars were all Chinese. It was also the Chinese who produced the most advanced astronomical observatory apparatus of the time. In metallurgy, China long held a leading position. When Europeans still could not turn out a single piece of cast iron in the 14th century, Chinese people had already produced cast iron on an industrial scale four centuries earlier. In the field of thought, Confucius, founder of Confucianism, not only had far-reaching significance for China, but for the whole of East and Southeast Asia. The warfare strategies introduced by the noted military strategist Sun Zi are still studied and referred to today. Taoism was an important school of thought, and is known for its simple

dialectical elements. Its position of "quietude and inaction" has many identical views with the thoughts of modern man. Taoism, based on the Taoist doctrines, is an independent religion established in China. Western civilization, he went on to say, did not begin until the era of Columbus, and China had left the Europeans far behind in science and technology before that time. Modern China is experiencing a completely new era in which respect for science and inventions and encourage creativity have become the guiding principles of society. All Rights Reserved E-mail:

Chapter 5 : Chinese civilization may have begun 2, years earlier than previously thought | Ancient Origins

A Bend In The River And The Beginnings Of China The region that gave birth to Chinese civilization was less promising than the once-fertile Indus plains. The Yellow.

More Essay Examples on Ancient China Rubric Mythology in Ancient China “ While written Chinese mythology is said to have begun in the 12th century BC, the stories themselves were passed down orally through many generation prior to this time. Chinese myths are however not complete stories, as the myths in Shan Hai Jing are very short and rarely exceed a paragraph. These mythical stories are usually interlinked with history, which is why they are considered to be important in understanding the culture. One of the earliest records of Chinese mythology is Shan Hai Jing, which literally means the tales from the mountains and seas. The book describes the ancient Chinese religion, history, geography, medicines and customs. One important facet of these stories is that they also represent the different periods of the pre-historical human society in China. The legendary Three August Ones: Fu Xi, Shennong, and Suiren are both, historical figures and important characters in these historical stories. Many generations of Chinese have worshipped these legendary chiefs as gods of medicine and offered them sacrifices in hope that they would bless them with good health. Fu Xi is said to have developed the pastoral farming, and is also supposed to have taught people about how to fish and hunt. Fu Xi, hence, is considered to represent the fishing and hunting period in the Chinese civilization. The second August one, Shennong is said to have developed agriculture. He is also known as Yandi and supposedly invented farming tools, taught men how to grow grains, distinguished between various herbs and also made pottery articles. Shennong is considered to represent the period of agricultural cultivation in the Chinese civilization. The third August one, Suiren is said to have discovered fire. He supposedly taught men to get fire through drilling wood, and after this, men supposedly started cooking food to eat. He is considered to represent the oldest invention known to mankind i. In addition to the three August ones, the Five Emperors or Lords are said to be the rulers who built states in China for the first time. Hugandi is also known as the Yellow Emperor, and is considered as the Chinese ancestor from which present day Chinese have descended. His wife Leizu is credited with rearing silk worms for the first time to make clothes, and his subordinate Cangjie supposedly created the Chinese characters. Yandi and Huangdi, were the leaders of two major tribes, and are considered to be the founders of the Chinese nation. Hence Chinese many times refer to themselves as the descendents of Yan and Huang. Zhuanxu was the grandson of Huangdi and was considered to be good in utilizing the talents and maintaining social order. Di Ku was yet another grandson of Huangdi who won popular trust with his benevolent administration. Yao was the son of Di Ku, who abdicated his throne to Shun instead of his son Dhanzu, initiating the system of determining successors by talent and virtue. Shun, was the successor of Yao, who was known for his filial piety and sagacity Fu, Yang, , pp. Ancient Chinese Monarchy “ As is mentioned in the earlier section, the period around BC and earlier is still hazy with regards to the culture in that era. Archeological evidence points towards at least four other contemporary cultures existing in different parts of China, during this period. These cultures consisted of multiple tribes each with a clan head. This is followed by the earliest formal dynasty known as Hsia dynasty dating BC to BC, though there is little evidence for unveiling this dynasty. Hsia dynasty was followed by the age of the Shang dynasty from BC to BC, which is considered by many archaeologists as the beginning of the Chinese civilization. Shang dynasty also followed certain religious practices and beliefs that form the basis of Chinese civilization and the beginning of religion. In fact Taoism has many elements that were a direct reference to the Shang dynasty. Emperor Qin Shihuang of the Qin dynasty is considered to be the first Chinese emperor who was responsible or unifying the warlords and unifying the whole of China, except the area of Yunnan, which was added later by the Han dynasty Wallach, , pp. A mention of the various dynasties in the previous section is essential because each of these contributed to the development of organized religion in China in some or the other way. The following section will describe the growth of religion in ancient China. Origins of Ancient Chinese Religion “ The early inhabitants in China were mainly engaged in agriculture, and lived in small villages with one family or clan in each village. Hence, their religion was closely connected with nature.

According to them the world was full of spirits of rain and cloud and thunder or rivers and mountains, trees, crops and of the dead. Sacrifices were made to these gods. A few of these gods survive even to the present day in some villages. The Earth was regarded as the source of life from where the abundance of crops and fertility of women, which were both closely related. Due to this reason, the grain was stored near the marital bedchamber, and betrothal and marriage took place in relation to the spring and autumn festivals. In the ancient China, the corpses were deposited near the dwelling place during decomposition, thus fertilizing the family soil. Also each new member of the family was regarded as a reincarnation, not of any special ancestor, but as the actual substance of all the ancestors. From these agricultural communities came two of the basic ideas i. People from this period also followed the sacrificial ritual. Sacrificial offerings were usually animals such as sheep, oxen, pigs, and some birds. Some types of grain and liquids were also considered as sacrificial offerings. These offerings were usually burnt and the liquid was poured out. Human sacrifices were performed very rarely, and were mostly disapproved of. Like people of Egypt, there was a practice of providing provisions for the comfort of the dead by burying various things with them that were considered to be necessary. The ancient Chinese religion, with its seasonal festivals, folk dances and songs, is different from the animism of the different races. This is because, a Chinese man is not seen as a separate individual in a community composed of different families, but is rather seen as a member or representative of his family which includes all the living members of the clan and extends backwards to his ancestors and onwards to his descendants. Hence, in the pre-Confucian period, the worship of ancestors seemed to take a very important place in the duties of the heads of clans. There was also the practice of offering sacrifices to each member of the ancestral hierarchy on a special day, and they had posthumous names according to the day of a week, which consisted of ten days and their relationship with the living descendant who was making the sacrifice. The sacrifices were generally made to the male ancestors in the direct lines, though there are a couple of queens who were worshiped along with their husbands. The sacrificial duty was also done mostly by men, though there were isolated cases of women praying to the female ancestors for their children. Women were in fact regarded to be of importance only if they had produced male heirs, and polygamy and keeping concubines were considered allowable if this did not happen. The entire practice had a very deep impact in the Chinese culture in terms of treatment and position of women Gernet, , pp. Ancient Chinese Religion in the Shang Era

As is mentioned in one of the sections above, Shang dynasty is considered to be the dawn of Chinese history and civilization. The dynasty began when the last of the kings of Hsia, who was a tyrant, was overthrown by one of his vassals, the Prince of Shang. The dynasty was later known as the Yin dynasty. While there were religious practices prior to the Shang dynasty, the concrete evidence of the same is found in the relics from the Shang era. The religious beliefs consisted of a belief in ancestors, divination, and a well-developed sacrificial ritual. The divination was focused around the king and the court diviners, and was an important part of the religious cult. The practice preceded the Shang dynasty, and was continued till many generations ahead. The decisions of gods were relayed by the priests by reading the under-shells of the tortoises, turtles and shoulder-blades of animals. The records of these divine messages and many times the interpretations by the King were meticulously recorded and preserved by the priests. The results of the divination were always favorable towards the king, who was right no matter what the message may be. The early Shang divination was concerned with disease, the harvest, dreams and hostile attack. However, by the late Shang times, divination came to be concerned mainly with the statements of the ritual sacrifices to be performed, and any negative statements were discarded as being wrong or unimportant. Hence, as the Shang dynasty progressed, the divination inscriptions became less elaborate, more formalized, and were filled with auspicious content, and any inauspicious content was either neglected or even removed Brown, Brown, , pp. The inscriptions on the thousands of oracle bones and tortoise shells that have been discovered yielded about five thousand characters, but only about one and a half thousand of this could be deciphered. This is considered to be the beginning of writing for China and East Asia. He was believed by the Shang to be their founder ancestor, the first and primeval ancestor spirit of the Shang aristocracy. Instead of this intermediary spirits and lesser deities were summoned by the King to act as intermediaries. He had the power to grant favor, but could also bring disease. As the ancestors became more remote in time, they blended in with a mass of

others and lost any individual identity. In addition to the ancestral gods, there were many nature deities, gods of the sun and moon, rain, wind, lakes and clouds. There also existed earthly gods such as those of rivers, mountains, soil and grain. The earth gods were parochial i. An interesting point here is that ancient Chinese did not feminize their earth deities; they were all male despite the emphasis on agriculture and fertility. While female deities were not entirely absent, they were not featured very widely. Such a concept is indicative of the patriarchal and hierarchical life of the ancient Chinese, which dominated the societal interchange and thought at very radical levels, and can be seen to be followed even to this date Fowler, , pp. Unlike many of the deities of other ancient civilizations, ancient Chinese religion lacked the development of a rich mythical pantheon of deities because their role was much more pragmatic. For instance, each household had a number of gods of its own, major earth god, gods of the entrances and of the well. In addition, there were gods of the villages and the local fields. The gods were more like forces than any specific idols. While some deities were idolized in the form of half-humans and half-animals; there were too many gods for any of them to maintain a specific identity. However there was one nature deity who had managed to develop a more personal nature: The river was very dangerous and had claimed many lives and was frequently flooded. Despite the presence of all the gods, the family was and always remained extremely important, and in fact is still the fundamental cell of the Chinese Society Gernet, , pp. Ancient Chinese Religion in the Zhou Era “ Shang dynasty was overthrown by the Zhou dynasty, which started out as a province in the rule of Shang dynasty. Zhou or Chou dynasty, as they are popularly known as, brought to the Chinese culture, strong elements of Turkish and Tibetan culture. After the conquest of the Shang, the new ruler of the Zhou dynasty died shortly, and the state ended up being ruled by the Duke of the Zhou. There were many upheavals in the political and administrative levels in the Chinese empire during this period. However, many of the Shang customs continued to be used in the Zhou dynasty. There was an increasing feudal type of system being developed in the society and this was combined with the practice of hierarchy of deities and ancestors, which had prevailed during the Shang era.

Chapter 6 : Cradle of civilization - Wikipedia

BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION Agriculture began in China around BCE in the Yellow River "the most northern of China's four great river systems.

China History Guide 1: If someone is interested in Chinese history can follow this little guide on history. I will give you a chronology of key dynasties ,key events, key personalities and key developments in Chinese society and culture. We all know that Chinese civilization is among worlds oldest civilizations. In similar period other civilizations appeared such as Sumerian, Greek and Egyptian civilizations. But Chinese one is only one which survived until today without destruction and extinction what happened to other ancient civilizations which were mentioned but also those of ancient Incas, Aztecs and Mayas and Romans as well.

Neolithic Period Beginning of the Beginning Sometimes it is really hard to say where and when actually Chinese civilization begins. It is like that because it is directly connected with legends and legendary figures such as Dragons, and deity emperors such as Yellow Emperor. Notable figures from this legendary times are Three Sovereigns and 5 Emperors. Fu Xi is considered as Heavenly Sovereign. Five legendary emperors are: From this period Chinese people count time most specifically from about BC during time of Yellow Emperor. So today according to lunar Chinese calendar it is year All these figures are legendary and mythological beings. Modern historians believe that these 5 emperors are mythological depiction of rulers of smaller territorial units during transition from neolith to feudal states. So lets put myths aside this time and trace real and official history of China. Oldest civilization in China appeared in fertile lands and valleys of two rivers Hoanghe and Yangtze. Oldest discovered settlement appeared in cca BC in valley of Yellow River in todays Henan province. Evidence of agriculture dates from this period and between vast area of these two rivers. In these areas evidence of cultivated rice was proven. On cliffs were found carvings that symbolize moon, sun, hunting, agriculture and deities found in todays Ningxia Autonomous Region. It is believed that they are oldest evidence of Chinese writing. Also cultures from these period were found in todays Hunan, Hubei, Shandong and Sichuan. All of them were quite similar even that they were not too close to each other. Proofs of pottery, exploitation of precious materials such as jade were found too. Etai Web Key events and figures: Statehood is firstly witnessed during Xia dynasty. Xia dynasty can be considered as first state dynasty in history of China. Before that rulers were leading only some clans over smaller territorial unit. Each clan governed over specific territory , lower nobility and peasants living there. They were choosing new ruler under principle of most capable man. According to Nermile most probable reason why state appeared were big floods from Yellow River. Than clans united around leader of Xia as the most capable one. His name was Yu and took higher tittle most likely of emperor as it was legendary tittle of previous mythical sovereigns and emperors. Nermile, Yu is considered as capable as he suggested solution to floods by digging canals. Than signs of state appeared when he established dynasty by declaring primogeniture and organizing divisions on lords and peasants. Until recent years it was believed that this dynasty was legendary but some tools and pottery was excavated near todays Erlitou in Henan province. It is believed by some historians that Xia dynasty was actually period of Shang dynasty and that name Xia was coined by Western Zhou court in order to legitimize their overthrowing of Shang dynasty. Yu the Great was the first one who established state system and brought Xia clan on power. Yu the Great is remembered as important ruler as he established the canals in order to prevent floods from damaging crops. Last emperor Jie from this dynasty was believed to be careless about people and used very tyrannical methods to oppress people and keep his power. His rule often is depicted with scenes of starvation and very poor harvests. So people from Shang clan overthrew him. Later this became practice for unsuccessful emperors during whose rule starvation and oppression occurred. Location of capital city of Xia state is not known for sure. It is believed but isnt confirmed that capital city was during some time near todays Dengfeng and some time near Gongyi both in Henan province. It is not definitely sure whether Xia rulers had tittle of duke or emperor but most often it is reffered to them as emperors. There is no much evidence of how society during this period looked like. Most of evidence says that emperor and aristocracy were on top and that relations to villagers was like master and slave. Chinese society

was strictly hierarchical with an emperor on top. Aristocrats were ruling elite and right hand of emperor. Villagers could have own crops but also had to work for feudal master. During Xia period slavery was more present than feudalism Villagers mostly harvested rice. Silk production is also evidenced. Pottery was one of main crafts. One of main achievements of this period is also that lunar calendar started to be used. People mostly believed in natural forces and worshipped them. During first 9 emperors of Shang dynasty life of people bloomed, governance was stable and culture and science were developing. There are much more reliable records of existence of this dynasty than about previous dynasty. Also more archaeological evidence exists about Shang dynasty. Some modern historians believe that maybe data about Xia dynasty dates from period of Shang dynasty and that both dynasties ruled in parallel time over different areas and that as result of their conflict was victory of Shang dynasty. When unstable periods of Shang dynasty came tyranny and oppression again increased and this few rebellions of vassals but rebel armies were defeated. Vassal rulers after defeat got some autonomy in order to motivate them not to rebel anymore. Emperor Zhou of Shang dynasty behaved same like last emperor of Xia dynasty and because of that he became last ruler of Shang dynasty. He led luxurious life while people were starving and as addition to that he used to torture and oppress people with loyal army and loyal feudal lords. He was also torturing some of ministers who made mistake. Corruption increased and unsatisfied elements of aristocracy and vassals united with other kingdoms among which was most notable King Wu from Zhou clan who led war against emperor Zhou. Shang dynasty was defeated and Emperor Zhou murdered. King Wu came to power united other vassals and aristocrats and put Zhou dynasty on throne. It is almost completely clear that Shang rulers held titles of emperors. There is much more evidence about social relations in Shang dynasty period than that about Xia. Aristocrats were main servicemen of emperor who had unlimited power. Merchants and craftsmen were free citizens living in towns and they always enjoyed such status through history of China. Merchants could move freely on their trips when they went to sell or buy items. Craftsmen could keep their own shops. Every aristocrat could have serfs as much as he could afford. They had small own piece of land but they had to work on much larger land and all credits went just to feudal lord. Villagers could be sold or set free too. During Shang dynasty economy bloomed especially agriculture and crafts. Fishing also becomes important sector of economy as large number of population lived in valleys on shores of rivers. Because of that fishing becomes very dominant. Crafts contributed to development of industry such as production of porcelain and bronze wares. Carving of these wares that were used for cooking, decoration, rituals or drinking wine became common. Also techniques of processing jade were developing. Silk production was on rise and one of most common crafts. Thanks to production of so many crafts and development of agriculture commodity exchange was on rise and thanks to that trade became important branch of economy. Very significant is continuous use of irrigation. Among arts painting and carving developed. Also music developed during these times. Artists were free citizens of Shang Empire. When its about education and science conceptualizing writing system and development of calendar occurred. Chinese symbols became more widely used in communication and were carved on bones, turtle shells and bronze objects. During Shang dynasty use of lunar calendar became more accurate than before. Philosophers were first scholars who preached wisdoms and educated aristocratic youth. Further about education importance will be spoken during Zhou dynasty. There is evidence that astronomy and math was developing. There is written evidence that solar and lunar eclipses were recorded. Also recording of positions of various stars was accurately recorded. When it comes to peoples beliefs they were mostly related to worshiping nature and living in harmony with nature.

Chapter 7 : World History/Ancient Civilizations - Wikibooks, open books for an open world

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December 11, The largest group is the Han Chinese, with about million people. Other groups include the Tibetans, the Mongols, the Manchus, the Naxi, and the Hezhen, which is smallest group, with fewer than 2, people. Culture includes religion, food, style, language, marriage, music, morals and many other things that make up how a group acts and interacts. Here is a brief overview of some elements of the Chinese culture. Philip Lange Shutterstock Religion The Chinese Communist Party that rules the nation is officially atheist, though it is gradually becoming more tolerant of religions, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. Currently, there are only five official religions. Any religion other than Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism are illegal, even though the Chinese constitution states that people are allowed freedom of religion. The gradual tolerance of religion has only started to progress in the past few decades. About a quarter of the people practice Taoism and Confucianism and other traditional religions. There are also small numbers of Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. Although numerous Protestant and Catholic ministries have been active in the country since the early 19th century, they have made little progress in converting Chinese to these religions. The cremated remains of someone who may have been the Buddha were discovered in Jingchuan County, China, with more than Buddhist statues in late Buddha was a spiritual teacher who lived between mid-6th and mid-4th centuries B. His lessons founded Buddhism. Mandarin dialects are spoken by Chinese dialects are very different, according to Jerry Norman, a former professor of linguistics at the University of Washington and author of " Chinese Cambridge Language Surveys " Cambridge University Press, To take an extreme example, there is probably as much difference between the dialects of Peking [Beijing] and Chaozhou as there is between Italian and French. Many Chinese are also fluent in English. Food Like other aspects of Chinese life, cuisine is heavily influenced by geography and ethnic diversity. Among the main styles of Chinese cooking are Cantonese, which features stir-fried dishes, and Szechuan, which relies heavily on use of peanuts, sesame paste and ginger and is known for its spiciness. Rice is not only a major food source in China; it is also a major element that helped grow their society, according to " Pathways to Asian Civilizations: The Chinese word for rice is fan, which also means "meal," and it is a staple of their diet, as are bean sprouts, cabbage and scallions. Because they do not consume a lot of meat " occasionally pork or chicken " tofu is a main source of protein for the Chinese. Chinese writing is based on symbols. Many sculptures and paintings depict spiritual figures of Buddhism, according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Many musical instruments are integral to Chinese culture, including the flute-like xun and the guqin, which is in the zither family. Eastern-style martial arts were also developed in China, and it is the birthplace of kung fu. This fighting technique is based on animal movements and was created in the mids, according to Black Belt Magazine. Recently, archaeologists discovered detailed paintings in a 1,year-old tomb in China. One recent development in Chinese science is teleportation. Dubbed "Fuxing," which means "rejuvenation," these trains are high-speed transportation systems that run between Beijing and Shanghai. It falls between mid-January and mid-February and is a time to honor ancestors. During the day celebration, the Chinese do something every day to welcome the new year, such as eat rice congee and mustard greens to cleanse the body, according to the University of Victoria. The holiday is marked with fireworks and parades featuring dancers dressed as dragons. The birthday of Guanyin, the goddess of mercy, is observed by visiting Taoist temples. It falls between late March and late April. Similar celebrations mark the birthday of Mazu, the goddess of the sea also known as Tianhou , in May or June. The Moon Festival is celebrated in September or October with fireworks, paper lanterns and moon gazing.

Chapter 8 : Beginnings Of China

However, the origins of Chinese civilization itself may date back 2, years earlier than previously thought, according to researchers who have new information on the environmental conditions of Neolithic China and the tribes from the period.

The Yellow River, from its source on the Tibetan plateau, turns and bends its way through the desolate Ordos Desert region to the Yellow Sea thousands of miles to the east. Like the semi-arid steppelands to the north and west, the great bend in the river receives a limited and uncertain amount of rainfall. The wet monsoons that inundate much of south and coastal China are so spent by the time they reach the Ordos region that the northern part of the area is desert. Humanlike creatures as well as humans have lived on the north China plain for hundreds of thousands of years. Peking man, one of the most famous of the hominids - two-legged primates - had campsites along the Fen River nearly , years ago, and several Paleolithic sites have been uncovered along the Yellow River where it arcs through the Ordos Desert. From Neolithic times c. The region abounded in rich loess, a fine-grained, yellowish-brown soil that was deposited by powerful winds from central Asia in prehistoric times. In places, this extremely fertile soil built up over thousands of millennia to depths of over feet. The Yellow River derived its name from the peculiar color of the soil that permeates the river as it is carried eastward toward the sea. Rich soil and the abundant supplies of water in areas near the Yellow River and its tributaries made the southern portions of the Ordos bulge, and the areas eastward along the North China plain suitable for intensive cultivation of grain crops and dense settlement. In addition, the region was shielded by mountains to the west and south, but open to trade with and migratory movements from the grasslands to the north. These communities coalesced into two widely spread cultural complexes that laid the basis for the Shang dynasty and Chinese civilization. Both the Yangshao culture c. In the Yangshao period, hunting and fishing predominated, while foods supplied by shifting cultivation were supplementary. By the Longshan period, the cultivation of grain, millet in particular, was the central preoccupation, while sedentary cropping techniques made it possible for them to support large, permanent villages surrounded by walls of stamped earth. Hunting and fishing continued, but domesticated pigs, cattle, and sheep became important sources of food and materials for shelter and tools. The finely crafted and painted pottery, and the production of silk which were prominent features of each culture, suggest the beginnings of specialized labor. Increasingly elaborate irrigation systems were vital to the expansion of the agrarian base of society. The shallow bed of the river after it empties onto the plains of north China, and the large quantities of silt it carries, render the river particularly treacherous in the springtime when the melting snows of the Tibetan plateau and Kunlun mountains turn the river into a raging torrent. From ancient times, controlling the river by building and maintaining great earthen dikes has been a major preoccupation of peasants and rulers. We know little about the social organization and daily life of the Yangshao and Longshan cultures, but two practices are worthy of note. Their rather extensive cemeteries and burial mounds may reflect a veneration for the deceased that was to become a central feature of Chinese social life and religious practice. The peoples of both cultures also employed animal bones for divination. When seared by heated pokers, the collar bones of cattle and other animals cracked in a variety of ways. The meaning of the patterns produced were then interpreted, probably by specialized seers or priests. This key mode of religious expression was, in the next phase of Chinese development, to be linked to the development of writing. And writing was to provide for the Chinese, perhaps more than any other people, the core ingredient of civilized life. Because no archeological sites connected to Xia have been found, it is possible that it was purely the fabrication of later writers. But in the centuries before B. Most of these were ruled by nomadic tribal groups that continued to filter into the area from the north and west. This region of different ethnic and linguistic groups formed a distinctive Chinese culture. Key features of this culture included its cooking vessels and cuisine, its reliance on cracked animal bones for divination, its domestication of the silkworm and use of silk fabrics for clothing, and its practice of ancestor worship. The form of ancestor worship followed also suggests that Chinese culture was already patrilineal. Until recent decades we knew little more about the Shang than their Xia predecessors. But extensive excavation of Shang

sites at Anyang, Zhengzhou, and elsewhere in recent decades have given us insights into many aspects of Shang culture and society. In some respects they were very like those of the Aryans who were in the process of conquering northern India in this same era. Like the Aryans, the Shang were warlike nomads. They fought on horseback and from chariots with highly lethal bronze weapons. Non-Shang subject peoples provided the foot soldiers that made up the bulk of their armies. Like those of Aryan India and Homeric Greece, Shang battles were wild melees that hinged on hand-to-hand combat between a few champions on each side. The Shang monarch was seen as the intermediary between the Supreme Being, Shangdi, and ordinary mortals. His kingdom was viewed as the center of the world, and he claimed universal dominion over all humankind. Shang rulers directed the affairs of state and bore ritual responsibilities for the fertility of their kingdom and the well-being of their subjects. In the springtime, they participated in special ceremonies that included a symbolic mating with female fertility spirits. In times of drought and famine, Shang rulers or perhaps designated surrogates were obliged to perform ritual dances in the nude. The dancer, presumably the surrogate, was later burned alive to placate the spirits whose anger had caused the natural calamities. Shang Society Though Shang monarchs were served by a sizeable regular bureaucracy in the capital city and the surrounding areas, most of the peasant and artisan population of the kingdom was governed by vassal retainers. These were recruited from the former ruling families and the aristocratic classes of the many small states. The vassals depended on the produce and labor from the commoners in these areas to support their families and military retainers. In return for these grants of control over the bonded peasants, warrior aristocrats collected tribute that went to support the monarch and his court. Shang rulers and their families, servants, and noble retainers lived within walled towns in large compounds that housed extended families. The extended families consisted of several generations of the family patriarch. As in Aryan India, family life at least among the upper classes was dominated by the elder males in the household. Unswerving obedience was expected of both women and younger males. Within their own household and family spheres, patriarchs and husbands exercised absolute authority. Their wishes and commands were carried down the family hierarchy from elder to younger brother and mother-in-law to young bride. Judging from later social arrangements in China, the extended-family pattern was widespread only among elite groups who had the resources to support the large households and many servants it required. Ordinary peasants, who made up the great majority of the population, lived in modified nuclear families - households consisting of husband and wife, their children, and perhaps a grandmother or orphaned cousin. Peasants were in effect the servants of the nobles. By Shang times they grew a wide range of crops, but the staple foods were millet, wheat, beans, and rice. They worked the land in the village in cooperative work teams using a variety of wooden hoes, spades, and crude plows. They lived in sunken houses of stamped earth, and made offerings to local gods of the soil and eichen hearth. Though the peasants had only very limited opportunities for social and economic advancement, they were better off than most of the slaves who made up the lowest strata of society in the Shang era. The large numbers of slaves in the Shang era indicate that the Shang warrior elite relied on a variety of systems to control and extract resources from the artisan, cultivating, and herding population that came under their rule. Though it is likely that many of the artisans were slaves, some were free and quite prosperous. It is probable that this latter group was engaged in the manufacture of products that required a high degree of skill, such as silk textiles one of the earliest of many inventions the Chinese have bequeathed to humanity and the casting of bronze. Though their dwellings were located outside the walls of Shang towns, some were surprisingly large and commodious. Life for the majority of the commoners was generally a good deal less rewarding than that of the skilled artisans. Much of what the commoners produced with long hours of backbreaking labor went to support an increasingly rapacious warrior elite. Given the vast tracts of unoccupied, arable land that existed both within the Shang domains and beyond to the south and east, it is not surprising that the elite resorted to measures such as enslavement and the bonding of peasants to the land they worked. These devices were employed to discourage flight to the nearby forests or long-distance migration to the frontier wilderness. Shang Culture And The Development Of Writing Given their frequent involvement in warfare and concern for controlling peasant groups, it is not surprising that the Shang elites were preoccupied with rituals, oracles, and sacrifices. In addition to the fertility functions of the ruler the entire elite was also involved in propitiating spirits to

provide good crops and numerous offspring. Shang artistic expression reached its peak in the ornately carved and expertly cast bronze vessels that were used to make these offerings. Shang bronzes have been compared favorably to the great bronze sculptures that were produced in Italy during the Renaissance some years later. Some offerings, such as fine grain, incense, wine, and animals, to the spirit world were sometimes a good deal less innocuous than others. Shang records tell of water festivals at which ritual contests were waged between rival boats, each seeking to sink the other. Those aboard the losing craft drowned when it capsized and were offered up to the deities responsible for fertility and good harvests. War captives and servants were also buried with deceased Shang rulers and major officials. Like the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, the kings of Shang went to the other world accompanied by their wives, servants, and loyal retainers as well as their favorite horses and hunting dogs, war chariots, and weapons. The ancestral veneration grew into a cult of the royal clan that involved sacrifices of war captives, mass burials, and the construction of tombs for each of the emperors. Concerns for abundant harvests and victory in war led the Shang elite to put great stock in the predictions provided by the shamans, priests who performed oracular rituals. Warriors about to go into battle, officials embarking on long journeys, or families negotiating marriage alliances routinely consulted the shamans to ensure that their enterprises would turn out well. This reliance on the shamans strongly influenced beliefs and behavior in the Shang era. The actual procedures followed by the shamans also gave rise to perhaps the single most important element in Chinese culture - writing. As in pre-Shang times, oracles made their prognostications on the basis of "readings" taken from animal bones or tortoise shells. Each of the bones or shells was drilled with a hole and touched by a red-hot iron poker. The bones or shells then cracked and the patterns of cracks were then interpreted by the shaman. Gradually the practice evolved of inscribing the bones and shells with painted designs that became part of the patterns the shamans "read. The development of writing became the key to Chinese identity and the growth of civilization in China. The many and diverse peoples of the loess region and the north China plain spoke a bewildering variety of languages that were often mutually unintelligible from one group to the next. They were surrounded by nomadic herders on the north and shifting cultivators to the south, whose contacts with and movements into the loess zone further complicated the linguistic muddle. But the written language that developed made communications possible between the educated elites of many of these peoples. Like the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians, early Chinese characters were pictographic. Thus, they readily conveyed the ideas they were intended to express. The original character for the sun, for example, was a circle with a dot in the center, while the character for a tree was a single tree and a forest was a set of three tree characters. Combinations of characters made it possible for the Chinese literati to convey increasingly complex ideas. The character for emperor, for example, combined elements of the ideographs for king, heaven, earth, and harmony. Over time the number of characters has increased substantially.

Chapter 9 : Origins Of Chinese Civilization - A New Tribal Renaissance

The location of ancient Chinese civilization China is a vast country with a huge range of terrains and climates within it. As well as the country's sheer size, geographical features such as mountain ranges, deserts and coastlands have all helped shape Chinese history.

The ancient China era was c. Without any reliable historical records, most of what has been pieced together about prehistoric life in China comes from speculation about human activity at archaeological sites and unearthed relics. The rest comes from what might be truth within Chinese mythology. The Xia Dynasty c. Most of the evidence for the Xia Dynasty, including its name, is perhaps just legend. Chinese civilization began along the Yellow River in the Shang era, and spread from there when Bronze Age culture reached its peak. Then, traditional Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism and Daoism, developed in the feudal Zhou era as China expanded in territory and population. Ancient China finally fractured into warring kingdoms for years, and its reunification marked the start of the imperial China age. The Shang Dynasty c. Many bronze objects and jade articles, which date back to BC, have been found to support these early archaeological records. The earliest form of Chinese writing "oracle bones" was found. The inscriptions on animal bones had pictographic characters. The Zhou Dynasty BC After the Shang era, the larger Zhou era territory was divided by a network of feudal states and was ruled over by kings. The king of Zhou only had direct control over a small portion of the realm and received tributes from the feudal states. It was a fairly peaceful time but, after BC, the Zhou king lost his authority and seven prominent states emerged. This era was divided into three periods: It marked the transition from tribal society to feudal society. Major philosophies and religions emerged that were the basis of Chinese beliefs in later eras, such as Confucianism and Daoism. The imperial China period makes up the bulk of Chinese history. With the cyclical rise and fall of dynasties, Chinese civilization was cultivated and prospered in times of peace, then reformed after rebellions and conquests. During this period, a number of institutions were established that laid the foundation of the basic political system for the next 2, years. The short-lived Qin Dynasty was the first to unite China as a country under an emperor instead of a ruling clan. A bureaucratic government was introduced, and was continued by the less extreme Han Dynasty. He and his Qin state united China by conquering the other warring states, and he ruled with an iron fist. Qin Shi Huang centralized the power of the empire after he took the throne and set up a system of laws. He standardized units of weight and measurements, as well as the writing system. The Qin Dynasty was the first and shortest imperial dynasty in China. During the later period of the Qin Dynasty, Liu Bang, a peasant leader, overthrew the unpopular Qin regime and established the Han Dynasty. In the Han Dynasty, a bureaucratic system in which promotion was based on merit was established and Confucianism was adopted by the state for national governance. During the reign of Emperor Wudi r. The multiethnic country became more united during the Han regime. It had far-reaching impacts for every dynasty that followed it. Its hold on power was tenuous, however, and China again fractured, this time into the Southern and Northern Dynasties " During this messy time, many religions emerged and Buddhism was popular among the barbarian kingdoms in North China. China went from having four warring kingdoms to being the most culturally sophisticated and technologically developed nation. Finally, it was consumed by the rise and fall of the phenomenal Mongol Empire, which stretched to Europe. It was a short, intense dynasty, with great conquests and achievements, such as the Grand Canal and the rebuilding of the Great Wall. It ruled for three centuries, and it was also the golden age for poetry, painting, tricolored glazed pottery, and woodblock printing. This situation continued to the end of the Tang Dynasty. This ended when one of the northern kingdoms defeated its neighbors and established the Song Dynasty. The modern-day northern Hebei Province was occupied by the Khitan and was under the control of the Liao Dynasty " In the northwest, the Western Xia Dynasty " " ruled by the Tanguts " controlled the modern-day Gansu and northwestern Shaanxi. Then the Song government moved and reestablished the capital in Hangzhou, establishing the Southern Song Dynasty " The Song era was a period of technological advances and prosperity. During the Song Dynasty, the handicraft industry as well as domestic and foreign trade boomed. Many merchants and travelers came

from abroad. The " four great inventions " of the Chinese people in ancient times paper, printing, the compass, and gunpowder were further developed in the Song Dynasty. At the end of the 12th century, Mongolian rule grew steadily. With Genghis Khan and his descendants expanding their territory, the Mongol Empire extended all the way to Eastern Europe. The part of the Mongolian khanate that ruled China was known as the Yuan Dynasty – He made Dadu modern-day Beijing the capital of the first foreign-led dynasty in China. However, they became increasingly inadequate in the ages of exploration, colonization, and industrialization. The Ming Dynasty – The Forbidden City After a series of natural disasters and rebellion movements led by the Han people, a new native dynasty was established in It was the last ethnic Chinese dynasty, sandwiched between two foreign ones. The Ming Dynasty represented a long period of stability. When his son and successor, Zhu Di, ascended the throne, he started to build the Forbidden City in Beijing. In , he officially made Beijing his capital. He was very supportive of international trade and sponsored several voyages to the West. It was an era of native Chinese strength and prosperity, which faltered due to natural disasters and greedy leadership, as had so many dynasties before it. Eventually, the Ming Dynasty fell due to the frequent peasant rebellions and Manchu attacks. The Manchus attacked China for three generations in succession, and finally founded the Qing Dynasty. The two most famous emperors of the Qing Dynasty were Emperor Kangxi r. Their reigns were "a golden age of prosperity". However, the last Chinese dynasty is shamefully remembered for the forced trade of the late Qing era. China was reduced to being a semi-colonial, semi-imperial country after the First Opium War, which began in However, the Republic of China could not be firmly established across China, with civil war ensuing for decades.