World History Notes
Chapter 3 section 4 and 5

Rise of Civilization in China

The Geography Influences Civilization:

Long distances and physical barriers separated China from Egypt, the Middle East and India. This contributed to the Chinese belief that China was the center of the earth and civilization.

- west and southwest – deserts and high mountain ranges (Tian Shan and Himalayas)
- southwest – rainforests
- north – Gobi desert
- east – Pacific ocean

China includes varied regions: valleys of the Huang (Yellow) river, Chang river. Fertile farming regions supported the largest populations and served for transportation.

Outlying regions of Zinjian and Mongolia. (harsh climates and rugged terrain)

Civilization began in the Huang River valley with Neolithic peoples who learned to control the river and farm. This led to rise of civilization called the Yellow River civilization.

**LOESS** – fine windblown yellow soil carried by the river. It settled to the river bottom raising the water level causing flooding.

**Shang Dynasty**- 1766BC – first Chinese dynasty dominates until about 1122 BC.

Clans – groups of families who governed the area.
Fu Hao – Wife of Shang King Wu Ding who owned land and helped to lead a large army against invaders.
Social classes:  top – royal family and noble warriors
Next – artisans and merchants
Majority of Chinese people were peasants.

**Zhou Dynasty**- overthrew the Shang. Their dynasty lasted until 256 BC
They promoted the idea of “**Mandate of Heaven**” or the divine right to rule. They used this to explain the dynastic cycle of rule. As long as a dynasty provided a good government it enjoyed the mandate of heaven. If rulers became weak, corrupt then the right to rule was pulled by heaven and disasters came upon the country.
Under the Zhou, the **feudal system** began where supporters were given control of different regions in return for military support to the ruler. Economy grew. Ironworking, ox driven plows, new crops, irrigation helped. Money, copper coins, population increased because of this.

Zhou dynasty ends because it was too weak to control feudal lords who ignored the emperor and battled one another.

During these 2 dynasties complex religious beliefs came into being. (many gods and nature spirits)

**2 major belief systems came into being:**

**Confucious** and **Laozi** – had ideas on how to restore social order and maintain harmony with nature. Confucious – developed a philosophy or belief system that was concerned with worldly goals, especially those of ensuring social order and good government. People should accept their place in society. 5 key relationships: ruler to subject, parent to child, husband to wife, elder brother to younger brother, and friend to friend. None of these were equal relationships other than friends. Everyone has duties and responsibilities. Correct behavior will bring about order and stability. Filial piety above all other duties. “respect for parents” Ruler responsible for providing good government. Confucious had great influence.

**Daoism** – teaches harmony with nature. Associated with Laozi who sought to live in harmony with nature. The best government is the one governed the least.

Both philosophies change and then blend.

**Achievements of early china under the Zhou:**
Silk making  
Complex writing systems  
First books

**Section 5: Strong Rulers Unite China**

**QIN Dynasty** – unified all of China. Zhen proclaimed himself Shi Huangdi or first emperor. He was determined to end divisions that had splintered and ended Zhou China.

He spent 20 years conquering most of the warring states.
Centralized power with help of Legalist advisors. (the only way to achieve order was to pass strict laws and impose harsh punishments for crimes.)

Legalist ideas survived for hundreds of years in laws that forced people to work on government projects and punished those who shirked their duties. Shi Huangdi’s most remarkable achievement was construction of “The Great Wall”

Important symbol to people of China – dividing and protecting their civilized world from the nomadic invaders north of the wall.

Shi Huangdi dies and Qin dynasty collapses.

**Han Dynasty** – Strengthens China
Most famous Han emperor – **Wudi** – took China to new heights.
- strengthened government and economy
- improved canals and roads
- created granaries across empire so government could buy grain when abundant and sell it when it was scarce.
- Created government **monopoly** of iron and salt.
- **Expansionism**

**Silk road links China to the West** –

Emperors made Confucianism the official belief system of the state.

Emperors adopted the idea of civil servants – officials in the government who win their positions by merit – proving their ability and position.

Han empire overthrown by warlords or local military rulers.

**Han achievements:**

Advanced science and medicine – acupuncture
Technology and engineering- making paper, shipbuilding, Expanded arts.

The Chinese accept Buddhism (Mahayanna) Buddhist monasteries became important centers of learning and the arts.