Dynasties of Ancient China

After the Shang dynasty was overthrown, three other dynasties helped expand, unify, and develop ancient China.

- The Zhou dynasty ruled for 900 years. However, the Zhou had difficulty controlling their territory.
- The Qin established China’s first unified empire. The name China comes from Qin, which is also spelled Chin.
- The Qin were overthrown, and the Han dynasty rose to power. The first Han emperor reduced taxes and changed harsh laws.

What did Confucius say?
The ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius (born about 551 B.C.) developed a guide to living a moral life. However, Confucianism is not a religion. The teachings of Confucius apply to everyday life as well as to political rule.

The Great Wall of China was built and rebuilt by several dynasties. This massive building project was begun by the Qin dynasty to keep out barbarian invaders. The Great Wall still stands and is over 4,000 miles long.

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**Zhou Dynasty**
1122–256 B.C.

- Ruled by Zhou dynasty
- Capital
- Qin Chinese state
- Shang Culture group
- Barbarian attack
- Desert
- China’s boundary today

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The Qin dynasty began in 221 B.C. and ended in 206 B.C. It was a time of great unity and expansion for China. The Qin dynasty built the Great Wall of China, which served as a defensive structure against nomadic invasions from the north. This wall was a significant engineering feat and remains a symbol of Chinese ingenuity.

The Han dynasty followed, beginning in 206 B.C. and lasting until 220 A.D. Under the Han dynasty, China expanded further, and trade routes such as the Silk Road were established. The Han dynasty was known for its prosperity and was a time of significant cultural and technological advancements.

The maps and text provide a historical overview of the Qin and Han dynasties, highlighting key events and developments during these periods. The maps also show the geographical extent of the Chinese empire during these dynasties, with symbols indicating capital cities, trade routes, and other important locations.