

Ancient China: The Classical Age

500 BCE to 500 CE

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Introduction

This Premium TimeMaps unit on Classical India is a sequence of maps offering an overview of the history of the Indian subcontinent between 500 BCE and 500 CE.

The sequence can be clicked through to gain a panoramic view of this area of world history.

Aims

The unit's aim is to quickly and clearly show the main episodes in the history of Ancient China in the Classical Period (500 BCE to 500 CE). It does not include the Shang and early Zhou periods - these are covered in the Timemaps Premium unit *Early Civilizations*.

Students should finish using this unit with a rounded overview of Classical Chinese history. For example, they should understand that

- When this period begins, China is effectively fragmented amongst a group of rival states;
- This period sees the origins and rise of Confucianism, as well as of rival schools of thought;
- The state of Qin conquered the other states to unite China and form the first imperial dynasty;
- Its rule was so harsh that the Qin dynasty came to an early end;
- It was succeeded by the long-lasting Han dynasty;
- Under the Han the main characteristics of pre-modern Chinese history were laid down, above all a Confucian bureaucratic government;
- The Han dynasty fell into decline and was succeeded by a period of weakness, invasion and great upheaval for the Chinese people.

How to use the Timemap

This Timemap is a supplementary resource that can be slotted in whenever the teacher thinks fit. It is ideal for use as an introduction to this era of world history.

The unit can be used as

1. a whole-class presentation, and/or
2. the basis for student-based activities.

For more, see below.

Section 1: Whole-class presentation

Using a projector/whiteboard system, you can show the map sequence to your class, talking through each map.

To help you do this, we have prepared accompanying Presentation Notes, which you can use as a script or an *aide-memoire*.

This activity could be used as a stand-alone exercise; or as an introduction to this period of world history; or as a wrap up/reinforcement exercise.

For each map, these notes mostly follow the same formula:

1. *Date and introduction*

The date to which the map refers, followed by a small introductory paragraph which seeks to encapsulate in a sentence or two what's going on in the map. These are in **bold**.

2. *Bullet points*

One or more bullet points, giving very brief points of interest in the map, or in the period it covers.

3. *Additional notes*

These give more in-depth support to the bullet points.

Much of the information they contain may be superfluous to your needs, especially if you are covering a topic quickly. However, we have included it so that it is there for you if you want it. We suggest that, prior to using the Presentation with your class, you go through these additional notes and highlight any you wish to use.

Some key words or phrases are in **bold**; these are often referencing points covered in the AP World History document, but they are also there to help you see at a glance the key points in a paragraph.

The Presentation commentary notes are followed by a short **quiz**.

A suggestion:

To keep your students more engaged (and, by the way, if your students are not engaged or benefitting from these maps, then let us know and we'll refund your money!), why not start each new map with a question: *How is this map different from the previous one?*

Another question for some maps might be, *What happens next, do you think?*

Presentation Notes

If using these in class it might be helpful to print these notes out.

The history of China up to 500 BCE should be briefly reviewed. In particular, students should be reminded of the following points:

1. Chinese civilization originated in the **Yellow Valley** region of northern China.
2. It entered its urban and literate phase under the **Shang dynasty** (18th to 11th century BCE).
3. The Shang dynasty was replaced by the **Zhou dynasty**. This imposed a feudal system of rule across northern China, under a warrior aristocracy.
4. Under the Zhou, the Chinese kingdom and its civilization expanded, but in the early 8th century the Zhou were weakened when a group of “barbarians” sacked the capital. The numerous fiefs into which the kingdom was divided then effectively became independent **principalities**.

500 BCE: The Zhou kingdom has fragmented into many local states.

- Although the kings of the Zhou dynasty still reign, they now have little authority. Real power now lies with many local princes (note 1).
- This is a period of instability and change. Old beliefs are losing their hold. In their place, new teachings are being put forward (note 2).

Additional notes:

1. The decline of the Zhou kingdom

In northern China, kings of the **Zhou dynasty** came to power in the 11th century BCE. Their kingdom expanded over an ever-larger area of China. To help them govern their growing realm, the Zhou kings divided it into many districts, each under a powerful local lord.

These lords served the Zhou kings loyally for a long time, by providing them with troops and tribute. Gradually, however, they became more concerned with ruling their own territories, rather than with helping the kings in ruling the kingdom as a whole.

Many states

In 771 BCE a group of barbarians and rebels sacked the Zhou capital, Haojing. The Zhou kings never recovered their authority. Although they remained as kings, real power now passed to the local lords.

These lords soon fell to fighting amongst themselves. The more powerful grabbed land from the weaker. Some territories become smaller and disappeared, while others become larger and more powerful. The survivors are no longer merely local lords. Although they pretend to acknowledge the superiority of the Zhou kings, in reality they are princes of **independent states**.

Power-struggles within states

Competition between these states has been hotting up. At the same time, power-struggles *within* the states have become more frequent and more violent. Old ruling families vanish as sons kill fathers, brothers murder brothers and ministers assassinate their masters. New ruling families take their place, taking and holding their positions through raw political ruthlessness.

2. New schools of thought

What is happening at the top infects the whole of society. Traditional loyalties are forgotten as clans break up into warring groups. Old virtues - reverence for authority, respect for elders, obedience to fathers - seem to have been forgotten.

This is a time of uncertainty and change. Beliefs and practices which had previously been accepted without question now come under scrutiny. Teachers travel through the land putting forward new ideas. This is the period in China known as the **One Hundred Schools**, as competing ideas battle with one another.

The most influential of these schools of thought are Legalism, Mohism, Daoism and Confucianism.

Legalism

This teaches that people are inherently wicked, and need to be kept in line by means of harsh punishments. People should even be punished for their neighbors' crimes. As for rulers, they

should do whatever it takes to maintain and strengthen their power. Treachery, trickery and force are all to be used when needed.

Mohism

This believes that all men, especially rulers, should treat others with respect and compassion. A ruler can go to war, but only to defend his subjects from attack.

Daoism

This was supposedly founded by the philosopher **Laozi** around 600 BCE. Its key text is the *Dao De Jing* (*The Way and its Power*).

The “Dao” means the “Way.” This teaching holds that men should live in harmony with nature (or the universe), and encourages them to “go with the flow” of life. For example, where a problem needs to be resolved, direct action should be avoided; an indirect approach is much better. A wise ruler should interfere with his people’s lives as little as possible.

Confucianism

The teaching put forward by **Confucius** (Kongfuzi, or Master Kong) calls for people to live moral lives in harmony with one another. To do this, all should give others their due respect. Children should obey their fathers (thus showing filial piety), wives their husbands, subjects their rulers and so on.

In due course, Confucianism would become the leading belief-system in China. It will help to create a society in which obedience and respect for authority is the usual state of affairs. It will play a large part in bringing stability and peace to the enormous country for long periods of time.

The key text for Confucianism is the **Analects**, a collection of the sayings of Confucius and some of his early disciples.

The Mandate of Heaven

One idea, already ancient by this date but which Confucians emphasise, is to do with the **Mandate of Heaven**. This holds that a line of rulers (a dynasty) has Heaven’s support only so long as the rulers govern the people justly. If they don’t, Heaven will transfer its support to another dynasty, and the first dynasty will fall from power.

Heaven’s disfavor can be seen when disasters such as floods and famines occur. Confucian thinkers say that if such signs show that Heaven’s favor has been withdrawn from a dynasty, then the people have the right - the duty, even - to rebel against it and install another dynasty.

360 BCE: China is now divided amongst several large and powerful states.

- As these states struggle for supremacy, some rulers and their advisors are developing more efficient ways of governing (note 1).
- This period sees continued economic and social changes, and also some important technological developments (note 2).
- The state of Qin is the one most committed to putting the teachings of the Legalist school of thought into practice (note 3).

Additional notes:

1. Stronger states

These centuries in Chinese history are traditionally called the **Warring States** period (this overlaps with the “Hundred Schools” period).

Smaller states have been conquered by larger ones. There are now far fewer states than there were before, but the ones that remain are much more powerful.

To survive in this period of fierce warfare, states have to raise larger and larger armies. To pay for them, rulers have to find ways of collecting taxes more efficiently. It is no longer enough to rely on the tribute the nobles send the prince.

A new kind of government official

Increasingly, princes send their own **officials** to collect taxes directly from the farmers. They also employ them to supervise irrigation projects, and to organize the construction of roads and canals.

These officials are well-educated men who are not members of the old aristocracy. They do not owe their positions to their family’s status or wealth. Instead, they are entirely dependent on their prince’s favor; they only hold their jobs while the prince and his ministers is satisfied with their work.

In centuries to come, such men will come to dominate government in China. Their values and tastes will be important in shaping Chinese civilization.

2. Society in transition

Although there are frequent wars, in many ways this is a time of progress in China. As we have seen, the princes are in need of revenues in order to pay for ever-larger armies. One good way of increasing taxes from farmers is by increasing the amount of crops which they produce.

State governments encourage the use of **iron tools** in agriculture. This makes it easier for farmers to **clear forests** and turn them into farmland. Some states also carry out large-scale **irrigation** projects. This brings much new land into cultivation, or makes existing farmland more productive.

Trade and towns expand

Taxing trade is another good source of revenue. Many princes therefore encourage the growth of trade. They make trade easier by minting coins (metal **coinage** is introduced into China in about 400 BCE).

Towns and cities grow, and new ones appear. The number of those who live in towns, such as merchants and artisans, increases.

Technological innovations

There are major technological advances at this time. Most notably, the Chinese develop the manufacture of **steel**, more than a thousand years before the West. In the military sphere, the **crossbow** appears. This is a more effective weapon than the bows and arrows of the time.

In this period, also, **canals** are first built in China for transportation, rather than just for irrigation. Chinese engineers would be by far the most skilled canal builders in the world for the next two thousand years.

3. The state of Qin

The rulers of the more powerful states are now taking the title king, to show that they are now completely independent of the Zhou king.

A militaristic state

One of these is the state of **Qin**. Located on the western frontier, the rulers of Qin are constantly facing threats from the non-Chinese barbarians on their doorstep. They therefore put into practice the teachings of the **Legalist** school of thought (see above, map 500 BCE, note 2).

They enact harsh laws and demand unquestioning obedience from their subjects. They make all people responsible for the crimes of their neighbors as well as themselves. They impose high taxes on the population, along with heavy labour duties and long military service.

In these ways, the state of Qin becomes the strongest of all the states of China.

210 BCE: The state of Qin has conquered all the other states, and it has imposed a harsh regime on the whole of China.

- The Qin state has overcome all the other states, and then expanded its borders even further, to create a large empire (note 1).
- It pursues rigidly centralizing policies across the whole of China (note 2).
- The ruthlessness with which these policies have been carried out is leading to great unrest (note 3).

Additional notes:

1. The Qin conquest

The Qin use their powerful army, as well as clever diplomacy and cunning espionage, to overcome all the other states. By 221 BCE they had unified the whole of China under their rule.

They thus create one of the largest empires in the Ancient World. The Qin ruler now styles himself the **First Emperor** of Qin: Qin Shih Huang.

This is an appropriate title, as he is the founder the first imperial dynasty of China.

Qin armies then venture out into barbarian territories and conquer large parts of southern China.

Defence against the nomads

To the north, the Qin face the warlike nomads of the steppes. Instead of trying to conquer them, the Qin emperor take steps to protect his empire by constructing strong defences.

Over previous centuries, the frontier states of China had built a number of long defensive walls. The Qin government now links these up to create a single defence system. The resulting wall is the forebear of the present **Great Wall of China**.

This is not the amazing stone wall that tourists see today - this would be built centuries in the future, under the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE). The Qin wall is built of beaten earth. Nevertheless it is a massive undertaking, requiring the forced labour of millions of peasants. Tens of thousands die from the harsh conditions under which they work, and many more never see their homes again.

2. The Qin establish their power

Having conquered the other states of China, the Qin take measures to firmly establish their power.

The government divides the empire into **provinces**, each under a governor appointed by the emperor. These provinces are themselves divided into districts, under prefects also appointed by the emperor. Through this chain of command the emperor and his ministers can enforce their will across the whole state.

A network of **roads** is laid out to link the capital with the frontiers. This enables the government to send troops quickly to wherever there is a threat of invasion. The government also sets up a postal service in which government couriers take messages very swiftly to all parts of the empire.

The Qin also repair **canals** and build new ones. These are both for transportation and for large-scale irrigation projects.

To reduce the danger of revolt by the people of the conquered states, the First Emperor has thousands of their **noble families relocated** to the capital, the better to keep an eye on them.

Standardization

The Qin find themselves ruling populations with many different laws and customs. They sweep all these local laws and customs away and impose the harsh **Qin law code** across the whole empire.

Coinage, weights and measures, writing styles, road widths and cart axel sizes, are all strictly **standardized**.

The Qin even attempt to standardize the thoughts of the Chinese people. They **ban all schools of thought** other than their own Legalist philosophy. To enforce this ban, they confiscate and burn thousands of Confucian, Mohist and Daoist books.

The Mohist school vanishes under this attack. Not so Confucianism and Daoism.

Many Confucian scholars risk death to hide their books. Hundreds pay with their lives by being buried alive, but they succeed in preserving their philosophy.

3. Rebellions

The ruthless methods by which the Qin carry out their policies has caused **immense misery**, especially among the peasants. They have had to pay the heavy taxes and provide the forced labor for the great public works schemes - not just the roads, canals and frontier walls, but also a gigantic tomb for the First Emperor (now one of the most famous tourist attractions in the world).

They have also been drafted in their hundreds of thousands into the Qin armies. They are stationed on the frontiers, often condemned to spend the rest of their lives far from home and family.

By the time of the First Emperor's death, millions will take no more of this. **Rebellions** are springing up in different parts of the empire.

202 BCE: After the death of the First Emperor, China was engulfed by rebellions. From the chaos, a new leader emerges to found a new dynasty.

- Liu Bang is a man of peasant origin who defeats all the other rebels to become the founder of a new dynasty, the Han (note 1).
- As emperor, he continues many of the Qin policies, but less harshly (note 2).

Additional notes:

1. The Han dynasty comes to power

Following the First Emperor's death, the Qin regime is soon overwhelmed by rebellions, and China swiftly descends into chaos.

Rival rebel forces have then fought with one another until one group has emerged victorious. This is led by **Liu Bang**, a man of peasant origin with little education. What he does have is outstanding shrewdness and ability.

By 202 BCE he has triumphed over his enemies to found the Han dynasty. It would take several more years for him and his successors to deal with challenges to their regime. However, once firmly established, the dynasty would last four centuries, the longest-lasting of all China's imperial dynasties.

2. Keeping things the same, but different

Liu Bang - or the emperor **Gaozu**, as he becomes known as on taking the throne - continues many Qin policies, but applies them less harshly. For example, he...

- reduces the taxes that peasants have to pay;
- makes the punishments of the legal code less severe;
- is careful not to embark on major projects that require huge amounts of forced labor.

This approach brings him the widespread support of the ordinary people of China.

100 BCE: The Han dynasty has given peace and stability to China, and expanded its borders.

- The Han emperors have largely kept in place the organization of government they inherited from the Qin (note 1).
- In contrast to the Qin, however, the Han regime has made Confucianism their ideology of government (note 2).
- Under the Han, the economy of China has expanded strongly, the empire has dramatically pushed out its borders in all directions (note 3).

Additional notes:

1. Building on the Qin heritage

The Han have kept most of the Qin regime's government organization - the provinces and districts, the huge army, the postal service and so on.

To supply their frontier armies, and move troops around their empire, the Han have maintained and expanded the road and canal network inherited from the Qin.

In some ways the Han have gone further than the Qin. The Qin appointed officials on merit, but the Han have taken the first steps towards creating the famous imperial **examination system** of later centuries. Men recommended for government service have to come to the imperial court and be tested on their educational attainments.

2. Confucian government

The Han emperors have increasingly surrounded themselves with **Confucian** scholars, and under the emperor **Wudi** (reigns 140-87 BCE) this school of thought becomes the official philosophy of government. For example, when men seeking government posts are examined on their educational attainments, they must prove themselves knowledgeable about Confucianism.

Confucianism teaches that rulers and their officials should govern in the interests of the ordinary people. This helps the Han rule remarkably well by pre-modern standards.

For example, under the Han, just as in Qin times, all males are liable for military service and labor service, but the Han government tries to make sure these duties are not too onerous.

3. Imperial expansion

Southern China

Under the vigorous rule of the emperor Wudi, the Han are bringing vast areas of southern China under their rule. Southern ports such as Canton will enable Chinese merchants to become involved in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean.

Central Asia and the Silk Road

Wudi has also brought the eastern steppes of **central Asia** under Han control. He has achieved this as much by diplomacy as by military action.

Wudi has then sent diplomatic missions to central Asia and on as far as the Middle East, to establish trade relations with the peoples there. This has led to the organization of a great trade route to the West across central Asia.

One of Wudi's main aims has been to purchase the fine horses bred by the nomads on the steppes. In exchange, the nomads purchase silk, that highly-prized fabric which the Chinese have been making for centuries. They have successfully kept the secrets of how to make silk, so other nations can only get it from them.

The nomads then exchange the silk for other commodities with peoples further west. These included the Romans. They value silk so highly that the Roman government would come to worry that the purchase of silk was draining the empire of silver and thus damaging its economy.

It was the importance of this textile to the trans-Asian trade route that led to it becoming known as the **Silk Road**.

Korea

Chinese armies also occupy a large part of the **Korean peninsula** at this time. Other states in the peninsula become vassals of the Han.

3. A prosperous empire

The **standardization** which the Qin introduced, and the Han have continued, has helped trade to flourish within China. A uniform system of coinage, weights and measures, writing, and axle widths on carts are used all over the empire. This helps merchants from different regions to trade easily with each other.

The **roads and canals**, which first the Qin and then the Han have constructed, allow merchants to transport goods much more easily and cheaply than before.

Most importantly, the **peace** that the Han government has brought has allowed commerce and industry to flourish, uninterrupted by war.

Farming also has benefitted from Han rule. It has expanded into new lands, often with government aid. The **wheelbarrow** is developed in China at this time, as is an early version of a seed drill.

100 CE: The Han dynasty is still in power three hundred years after its start - although there was a brief interruption between 9 and 23 CE.

- A chief minister, Wang Mang, usurped the throne in 9 CE, but his policies aroused so much opposition that the Han dynasty was restored to power in 23 CE (note 1).
- Buddhism has recently arrived in China (note 2).
- This period sees the invention of paper (note 3).
- The Han empire's strength is now being sapped by various factors (note 3).

Additional notes:

1. Coup and counter-coup

In 9 CE a powerful chief minister, **Wang Mang**, seized the throne. By 23 CE, however, his policies, aimed at trimming the wealth and power of landowners, had created so many powerful enemies that he was killed.

After a period of widespread and very destructive disturbances, the Han dynasty was restored.

2. The coming of Buddhism

Buddhism has come to China from India during the 1st century CE. It was brought by traders and monks along the Silk Road.

This alien religion is treated with great suspicion at first. Some Chinese, however, do convert, even at the highest level of government.

3. Paper

Sometime during the Later Han, the technology of **paper-making** has been developed in China.

This innovation apparently occurred at the imperial court itself. Previously, bamboo scrolls had been used, but these were awkward to make and heavy to carry. Silk was suitable for writing on, but far too expensive for everyday use. Paper is cheap and simple to make, and easy to carry around. Its use has quickly spread throughout China.

4. Long-term trends

Long-running social trends are at work to weaken the Han empire. After the downfall of Wang Mang, the Han dynasty largely owed its restoration to the support of the **landowning** class. Since then, therefore, government policies have favored this group. Landowners are growing wealthier as their estates grow larger. Many peasants are losing their land to become tenant farmers or serfs.

In short, the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.

Things have got worse recently, because a series of weak emperors have allowed standards of government to slip. **Corruption** is spreading within the civil service, and government officials are becoming more oppressive.

The peasantry are growing more and more rebellious. There is danger ahead for the Han.

316 CE: The Han empire has fallen, and China is now weak and divided. The northern half has been occupied by barbarian invaders from central Asia.

- The Han dynasty fell in 220 CE. This led to a weak and divided China, and then the occupation of northern China by barbarians from central Asia (note 1).
- This is a wretched period for the ordinary people of China. Millions lose their lives or their farms, and millions more flee south to escape the chaos in the north (note 2).
- In these troubled times, many Chinese of all ranks turn to Buddhism for comfort and hope (note 3).

1. The fall of the Han and after

The Han empire fell into steep decline after 180 CE. Under a series of child emperors, violent factions fought each other for control of the imperial court.

This allowed **corruption** to spread throughout government. Officials oppressed the people, with the weakest in society suffering most, as they always do. Peasant unrest grew, leading to a massive uprising.

This led swiftly to the downfall of the Han dynasty. In its place, rival kingdoms fought one another. By the late 3rd century CE one kingdom had defeated the others; all of China was again reunited, under the **Jin dynasty**.

Very soon, however, disaster struck. In the early 4th century, **nomadic tribes** from the steppes of central Asia invaded and occupied northern China. The Jin government was forced to flee to southern China.

2. Widespread suffering

These times are known in Chinese history as the **Three Kingdoms Period**. It is famous for many thrilling tales of daring and cunning. In reality it was a wretched period for the people of China.

In late Han times, rich landowners had prospered at the expense of ordinary farmers. In the final decades of the Han empire and the period of the Three Kingdoms, extremely high levels of chaos and violence made things even worse for the poor. Millions lost their lives, and many more were forced from their homes and livelihoods.

Landowners and peasants

Wealthy landowners fortified their estates, and raised bands of armed followers to protect them. They were able to dominate the governments of the various kingdoms. This in turn allowed them to grab more land for themselves.

Many peasants found their small farms seized, and themselves forced into serfdom. Others offered their lands to their local landowners to place themselves under his protection. Millions more fled their lands altogether, and headed south.

Conditions became even worse during the barbarian invasions. Many cities were sacked, and farms and homes across large areas of land were devastated. These disasters led to millions of more deaths, and set in motion another massed flight of peasants southward.

3. The rise of Buddhism in China

During these troubled times, **Confucianism** has no answers to the sufferings of so many people. It remains the official philosophy in all the Chinese states, but even the officials do not pay it much more than lip service. Instead, many Chinese, of all ranks, are turning to **Buddhism**, with its message of hope and salvation. It is at this time that this foreign religion becomes widespread throughout Chinese society.

407 CE: In northern China, non-Chinese dynasties now rule several kingdoms, while in the south there is a single state, ruled by the Jin dynasty.

- The mass flight of peasants southward has made population levels rise in southern China (note 1).
- The barbarians who invaded northern China in the early 4th century CE have established kingdoms there (note 2).
- The rise of Buddhism has continued at an increasing rate, in both north and south China (note 3).

Additional notes:

1. Southern China

During the Han dynasty, southern China was a frontier zone. The mass **migration** of peasants from northern China, however, has led to population levels rising sharply here. New land is being brought into cultivation through the draining of lakes and swamps, the clearing of forests and the creation of irrigation systems. This is a process which will continue for centuries to come.

2. The northern barbarian-ruled kingdoms

In northern China, the barbarian tribal leaders struggle to govern their newly-conquered states.

The rulers need the help of native Chinese officials in administering kingdoms, in which millions of native Chinese live. Little by little, the rulers rely more and more on these officials. Little by little, also, the rulers adopt Chinese ways. There is an almost irresistible tendency for these barbarian kings and their followers to become more and more **Sinified** (i.e. more Chinese) in culture and way of life.

Many tribesmen are appalled at this trend. They try and put a stop to it by rebelling, and sometimes massacre the Chinese officials. But the trend towards more Chinese ways soon starts again.

All these barbarian-ruled kingdoms are thus very unstable. From time to time they even split, into two or more kingdoms.

3. Buddhism

More and more Buddhist monasteries and temples are being built. Buddhist styles of art and architecture appear, based on Indian models. Later, Buddhist art becomes more Chinese in its style. For example, the Buddhist **stupa** - a domed-shape building - soon evolves into the Chinese **pagoda**.

As it spreads in China, Buddhism is increasingly influenced by Daoism. As a result, distinctly Chinese forms of Buddhism begin to emerge. The most famous of these is **Chan Buddhism**. This will later spread to Japan as Zen Buddhism.

500 CE: In the north, the different barbarian-ruled states have been merged into a single kingdom, ruled by the Northern Wei dynasty.

- The Northern Wei state is more stable than previous kingdoms under rulers of non-Chinese origin (note 1).
- Southern China's population and economy has continued to grow (note 2).

Additional notes:

1. The Northern Wei state

The reason why the **Northern Wei** state is more stable than previous barbarian-ruled kingdoms is that its ruling class has become much more unified. Leading non-Chinese families have inter-married with the families of senior Chinese officials. Even the rulers come from joint barbarian-Chinese backgrounds.

The Northern Wei ruling class is therefore becoming ever more Chinese in its ways. Its men are educated along Confucian lines (though they mostly remain Buddhist by religion). More and more of them are becoming government officials. They are giving up the ways of their nomadic ancestors.

2. Southern China

In the south, the **Jin dynasty** has been overthrown (in 420 CE). Four weak dynasties follow in quick succession. Nevertheless, southern China has seen a rising population, increased agricultural production, and reviving trade.

After the Presentation:

The questions in the Presentation notes will work just as well if used as a reinforcement exercise at the end of the Presentation, or indeed as student-based tasks.

Here is a quick **Quiz**:

The answers are given in (*Italics*).

1. What dynasty theoretically ruled China in 500 BCE? (*The Zhou dynasty*)
2. Who was the philosopher living in about 500 BCE whose ideas would influence China up to modern times? (*Confucius*)
3. Which state rose to power to bring all the other states of China under its rule by 220 BCE? (*Qin*)
4. This state's rulers put into practice the ideas of one of the schools of thought in China at this time - what was this school? (*The Legalist school*)
5. What early version of a line of defences did this dynasty establish? (*The Great Wall of China*)
6. Which long-lasting dynasty came to power after a period of chaos in 202 BCE? (*The Han dynasty*)
7. This dynasty adopted a particular philosophy as its official ideology - what was it? (*Confucianism*)
8. The emperor Wudi used diplomacy to organize a great trade route across central Asia - what was it called? (*The Silk Road*)
9. What important technological development occurred during the later stages of this dynasty's time in power? (*Paper-making*)
10. What key event took place in 220 CE? (*The fall of the Han empire*)
11. Non-Chinese tribes invaded China in the 4th century CE - which part of China did they occupy, the north or the south? (*North*)
12. A system of belief from outside China became popular during these years - which religion was this? (*Buddhism*)

Class discussion

You might like to hold a class discussion at the end of the presentation:

What were the key events and episodes in Chinese history during these centuries?

Is it possible to divide the history of China during this period into two, three or four major phases?

What were the long-term trends in Chinese history at this time?

What were the most important achievements of Chinese civilization during this period?

Section 2: Student-based enquiry work

The students can tackle these tasks either as individuals or in small groups. They will obviously need to have access to this Premium TimeMap unit.

They can present their answers in essay form or as presentations.

The questions are designed to stimulate enquiry, thought and discussion.

Short exercise

Multiple choice questions

1. The dynasty which theoretically ruled China in 500 BCE was the A. Han, B. Northern Wei, C. Qin, or D. Zhou dynasty?
2. Confucius said that people should A. be responsible for the crimes of their neighbours, B. respect and obey their fathers, C. do as little as possible - let nature take its course, or D. love all people equally, whoever they may be.
3. The “Mandate of Heaven” is an idea which says that A. all rulers have been placed on their thrones by Heaven, so no one has the right to rebel against them; B. no ruler has Heaven’s blessing - all of them fall short of what Heaven requires, so it’s simply a question of “might is right”; C. Heaven has very little interest in puny human beings - its support is given and taken away entirely at random; D. rulers have the support of Heaven only while they rule justly, therefore people have the right to rebel against an unjust ruler.
4. The ruler who took the title “First Emperor” belonged to A. the Han dynasty, B. the Zhou dynasty, C. the Qin dynasty, or D. the Jin dynasty?
5. The First Emperor’s dynasty followed the A. Mohist, B. Legalist, C. Daoist, or D. Confucian school of thought.
6. Which of these measures did the First Emperor’s government NOT carry out: A. standardize all weights and measures, B. create a road system which connected the capital to the provinces, C. organize the Silk Road, D. connect earlier walls to create a single system of defence?
7. The founder of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang, was a man A. of great education, B. of peasant origin, C. of aristocratic background, D. of barbarian birth.
8. A technological innovation during the late Han period was A. the crossbow, B. steel, C. gunpowder, or D. paper?
9. The religion that came to China in Han times and later became very popular was A. Buddhism, B. Hinduism, C. Christianity, or D. Zoroastrianism?

Critical Thinking

Students tackle one or more of these questions by giving short answers.

1. Why did Confucius place so much emphasis on respect and obedience, do you think?
2. What was the school of thought which called on people to “go with the flow” of events and not try to deal with them head on?
3. What were the factors which led to the rise of the Qin dynasty?

4. Why did the Qin dynasty last for only a short time?
5. The Han dynasty followed the unpopular Qin - why did they not ditch Qin policies altogether, do you think?
6. Explain why the Han dynasty lasted such a long time.
7. What were the developments which led to the fall of the Han dynasty?
8. Why did Buddhism become so popular in China after the fall of the Han dynasty?
9. What were the key events or episodes in Chinese history during the period 500 BCE to 500 CE?

Extended exercises

Choose one or both of these exercises to do.

Exercise 1.

Students go through the sequence of maps, and, carefully reading the information, answer the questions below.

They then use their answers as the structure in preparing an essay or presentation about the history they have covered.

1. What dynasty theoretically ruled China in 500 BCE? (*The Zhou dynasty*)
2. What event took place in 771 BCE to reduce the authority of this dynasty? (*Sacking of the Zhou capital by barbarians and rebels*)
3. The period of Chinese history between c. 500 BCE and 230 BCE is called by two names. One of these reflects the fact that this was a time in which thinkers were putting forward many different ideas - what is this name? (*The 100 Schools*)
4. What were the four leading schools of thought at this time? (*Legalism, Mohism, Daoism and Confucianism*)
5. Which of these schools taught that people were basically wicked and can only be kept in check by the threat of severe punishments? (*Legalism*)
6. Which school taught that all men must love one another? (*Mohism*)
7. Which school was supposedly founded by the philosopher Laozi? (*Daoism*)
8. Who was the philosopher who taught that Children should obey their fathers, wives their husbands, subjects their rulers and so on. (*Confucius*)
9. By what name is the key text of his philosophy known? (*The Analects*)
10. There was an ancient idea that a ruler only enjoyed the support of Heaven so long as he ruled justly - what was this idea called? (*The Mandate of Heaven*)
11. The period 500 BCE to 230 BCE is known by two names. One of these has already been referred to. What is the other name? It reflects the fact that this was period in which China was wracked by violent fighting. (*The Warring States*)
12. Name a major technological advance at this time. (*Making steel, the horse collar, the crossbow, transport canal*)
13. What title do the rulers of the more powerful states take for themselves at this time? (*King*)
14. Which state rose to power to bring all the other states of China under its rule by 220 BCE? (*Qin*)
15. This state's rulers put into practice the ideas of one of the schools of thought in China at this time - what was this school? (*The Legalist school*)

16. The ruler of this state who completed the conquest of all the other states took for himself what title? (*First Emperor*)
17. What early version of a famous line of defences did this dynasty establish? (*The Great Wall of China*)
18. Name one of the things which this dynasty standardized across their whole empire? (*Laws, coinage, weights and measures, writing styles, road widths or cart axel sizes*)
19. A rebel leader founded a new dynasty in 202 BCE - what was his name? (*Liu Bang*)
20. What name did he take as emperor? (*Gaozu*)
21. What was the long-lasting dynasty which he founded? (*The Han dynasty*)
22. This dynasty adopted a particular philosophy as its official ideology - what was this? (*Confucianism*)
23. Does this philosophy have any influence on the way this dynasty governs China? (*Yes - it encourages the rulers to govern with the interests of the people in mind.*)
24. Who was the emperor who first organized a great trade route across central Asia? (*Wudi*)
25. What was this trade route called? (*The Silk Road*)
26. A powerful chief minister seized the throne for himself in 9 CE - what was his name? (*Wang Mang*)
27. A religion new to China was introduced soon after this time - which was this? (*Buddhism*)
28. What important technological development occurred during the later stages of this dynasty's time in power? (*Paper-making*)
29. What key event took place in 220 CE? (*The fall of the Han empire*)
30. What is the name of the period which followed this? (*The Three Kingdoms*)
31. Non-Chinese tribes invaded China in the 4th century CE - which part of China did they occupy, the north or the south? (*North*)
32. Which class benefitted from the troubles of this period? (*The landowners*)
33. Which state, whose rulers were of joint Chinese-barbarian origin, was ruling the whole of northern China in 500 CE? (*The Northern Wei*)

Exercise 2. (This is a challenging exercise, perhaps for more able students.)

Look at the maps, and read the information attached to each. As you do this, take notes, focussing on the issues below. Note when and where events happen; why they happen; and what changes as a result of them happening.

Belief systems: new beliefs or schools of thought; how they influenced society.

Government: developments in government; reasons for the rise and decline of states.

Society and Economy: factors in the growth (or decline) of trade; its impact on the economy; technological innovations; the changing fortunes of landowners and peasants; migrations.

Then answer the following question: What were the long-term trends in Chinese history between 500 BCE and 500 CE?

Appendix 1: TimeMaps articles for further reading

A list of all TimeMaps articles for Period 2 can be found on the Encyclopedia home page. Here is a selected list of the key articles which students should find most helpful for China:

Ancient China - an overview of Chinese civilization in ancient times

The Zhou dynasty - a survey of the history of China from c. 1100 BCE to 220 BCE, including the period of Confucius, and the rise of the Qin empire

The Qin dynasty - the rise and fall of the Qin dynasty, and the policies which caused both its success and downfall

The Han dynasty - the rise and fall of probably the most influential dynasty in Chinese imperial history, and the social, political and ideological trends which occurred

Divided China - the period of division which followed the fall of the Han dynasty, along with the social, political and religious developments which occurred.