From his base in western China, the powerful ruler of the state of Qin rose to unify all of China.

An ancient Chinese poet and historian described how Zheng (juhng) crushed all his rivals: “Cracking his long whip, he drove the universe before him, swallowing up the eastern and the western Zhou and overthrowing the feudal lords.”

In 221 b.c., Zheng proclaimed himself Shi Huangdi (shee hoo ahng dee), or “First Emperor.”

Though his methods were brutal, he ushered in China’s classical age.

Historians call it a CLASSICAL CIVILIZATION because it set patterns in government, philosophy, religion, science, and the arts that served as the framework for later cultures.

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Unity Imposed
He distributed the lands of the nobles to peasants
Peasants still had to pay high taxes to support the emperor’s armies and building projects
To promote unity, the First Emperor:
- Standardized weights and measures
- Single coin system
- Standardized Chinese writing
- Repaired and extended roads and canals to strengthen the transportation system

Crackdown on Dissent
Shi Huangdi moved harshly against critics
He jailed, tortured, and killed many who opposed his rule
Hardest hit were the feudal nobles and Confucian scholars
To end dissent, he approved a campaign of book burning of all works of literature and philosophy
Only books on medicine and agriculture were spared

The Great Wall
Shi Huangdi’s most remarkable and costly achievement was the Great Wall
Individual feudal states had built walls to defend their lands against raiders
He ordered the walls to be joined
Hundreds of thousands of laborers worked for years through bitter cold and burning heat
It became a wall almost 25 feet high topped with a wide brick road

The Great Wall
Many workers died in the harsh conditions
Over the centuries, the wall was extended and rebuilt many times snaking for thousands of miles across northern China
The wall did NOT keep invaders out of China
It did demonstrate the emperor’s ability to mobilize the vast resources of China
In the long run, the Great Wall became an important symbol to the Chinese people, dividing and protecting their civilized world from the nomadic bands north of the wall
The Great Wall

How long is it?
Over the centuries the wall eroded, was built, rebuilt and extended many times. If all the fortified walls built in the different dynasties are included, the total length of it would exceed 31,000 miles!

When the last construction of the wall took place in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the length was then approximately 3,700 miles long, 25-feet-tall and 15 to 30-feet-wide.

How was it built?
Most of the current Great Wall was built during the Ming dynasty.

The Great Wall included a series of watch towers (40 feet tall) and forts which could house soldiers, grain and weapons.

Beacons could enable the passing of messages quickly along the wall.

Special weapons were developed to enable the wall to be defended against attack.
The Great Wall

Wall of death

The wall, which is one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World and was granted the World Heritage status by UNESCO in 1987, was originally constructed by laborers comprising of soldiers, common people and criminals. It was slave labor.

Approximately 300,000 soldiers and 500,000 commoners worked on the wall during the Qin Dynasty.

How was it defended?

The Great Wall is not one long wall meant to keep invaders out of China. It is dotted regularly with towers numbering 25,000 in all. These towers served two purposes:

First, soldiers could be posted in the tower to keep watch for anyone approaching the wall.

Second, the soldiers in the tower could light a signal fire which would continue from one tower to the next until every available troop was alerted.

It was one of the worst jobs in the world:

- rocks fell on people
- walls caved in
- workers died of exhaustion and disease
- laborers were fed only enough food to keep them alive
- up to 1,000,000 people died constructing the Great Wall!

The Wall was known as “the longest cemetery in the world.”
The Great Wall

How was it defended?

Soldiers also patrolled on top of the wall from tower to tower to spot any movement the tower guard might miss.

The whole length of the Great Wall garrisoned tens of thousands of peasant soldiers.

Wide passages were constructed along the tops of the walls to expedite the movements of large numbers of troops and couriers.

Collapse

Shi Huangdi thought his empire would last forever.

But when he died in 210 B.C., anger over heavy taxes, forced labor, and cruel policies exploded into revolts.

As Qin power collapsed, Liu Bang (Lee-oo-bahng), an illiterate peasant leader, defeated rival armies and founded the new Han dynasty.

Like earlier Chinese rulers, Liu Bang claimed that his power was based on the Mandate of Heaven.
The Han Dynasty

As emperor, Liu Bang took the title Gao Zu (gow dzoo) and set about restoring order and justice to his empire.

He continued earlier efforts to unify China.

He lowered taxes.

Eased the Qin emperor's harsh Legalist policies.

In a key move, he appointed Confucian scholars as advisers.

Emperor Wudi

The most famous Han emperor.

He strengthened the government and economy.

He chose officials from Confucian "men of wisdom and virtue.”

To train scholars, he set up an imperial university.

Emperor Wudi

He improved canals and roads.

He had granaries set up across the empire so the government could buy grain when it was abundant and sell it at stable prices when it was scarce.

He reorganized finances.

Imposed a government control of the sale of iron and salt which gave the government a source of income other than taxes on peasants.

A MONOPOLY is the complete control of a product or business by one person or group.

Silk Road to the West

Wudi opened up a trade route, later called the SILK ROAD, that would link China and the west for centuries.

New foods such as grapes, figs, cucumbers, and walnuts flowed to China from western Asia.

Traders returned to China bearing furs from Central Asia, muslin from India, or glass from Rome.

The Chinese sent tons of silk westward.

Silk Road to the West

The Silk Road stretched for 4,000 miles, linking China to the Fertile Crescent in southwestern Asia.

Few traders covered the entire distance.

Goods were relayed in stages from one set of traders to another.

At the western end, trade was controlled by various people, including the Persians.
Han emperors made Confucianism the official belief system of the state. They relied on well-educated scholars to run the bureaucratic government. A scholar-official was expected to match the Confucian ideal of a gentleman. He would be courteous and dignified and possess a thorough knowledge of history, music, poetry, and Confucian teachings.

Adopted the idea that government officials should win positions by merit rather than through family background. To find the most qualified officials, they set up a system of exams. These civil service exams were given at the local, provincial, and national levels.

To pass, candidates studied the Confucian classics, a collection of histories, poems, and handbooks on customs that Confucius was said to have compiled. In theory, any man could take the exams. In practice, only those who could afford years of study could hope to succeed. Occasionally, a village or wealthy family might pay for the education of a brilliant peasant boy.

Confucian teachings about filial piety and the superiority of men kept women from taking the civil service exam. The civil service system had an enormous impact on China for almost 2,000 years. It put men trained in Confucian thought at every level of government and created an enduring system of values. Dynasties rose and fell, but Confucian influence survived.

As the Han dynasty aged, signs of decay appeared. Court intrigues undermined emperors. Weak emperors let canals and roads fall into disrepair. Burdened by heavy taxes and crushing debt, many peasants revolted. They joined secret groups of bandits known by colorful names such as the “Red Eyebrows” and the “Green Woodsmen.”

The Han period was one of the golden ages of Chinese civilization. Han China made such tremendous advances the Chinese later called themselves “the people of Han.”
Achievements of the Han Golden Age

Science

- Han scientists wrote texts on chemistry, zoology, botany, and other subjects
- Han astronomers improved earlier calendars and invent better timekeeping devices
- One scientist invented a simple seismograph to detect and measure earthquakes
- Wang Chong argued that no scientific theories should be accepted unless they were supported by proof

Medicine

- Chinese physicians diagnosed diseases, experimented with herbal remedies and other drugs, and developed anesthetics
- Some doctors explored the uses of acupuncture where the doctor inserts needles under the skin at specific points to relieve pain or treat various illnesses

Technology

- In its time, Han China was the most technologically advanced civilization in the world
- Cai Lun invented a method for making paper out of wood pulp
- They pioneered advanced methods of shipbuilding and invented the rudder
- Other practical inventions included bronze and iron stirrups, fishing reels, wheelbarrows, suspension bridges, and chain pumps

The Arts

- The walled cities of Han China boasted splendid temples and palaces amid elegant parks
- Artisans produced delicate jade and ivory carvings and fine ceramic figures
- Bronzeworkers and silkmakers improved on earlier techniques and set high standards for future generations
Achievements of the Han Golden Age

The Arts

In *Lessons for a Woman*, a handbook of behavior written by Ban Zhao (bahn jow) around AD 100, the proper behavior for women and men was carefully spelled out. Ban Zhao favored equal education for boys and girls.

However, she stressed that women should be obedient, respectful, and submissive.

“Let a woman modestly yield to others,” she advised. “Let her respect others.”

Shi Huangdi, Gao Zu, Wudi, and later Han rulers forged a vast and varied land into a united China. Han rulers created an empire roughly the size of the continental United States. During this period, Chinese officials established the pattern of government that would survive until 1912.

China would break up and be painfully reassembled over and over. After periods of disunity, a new dynasty would turn to Confucian scholars to revive the days of Han greatness.