

Comparing Daoism and Greek Mythology		
Topic	Taoism Only	Both Taoism and Greek Mythology
Nature of Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent abstract ideas</li> <li>• Are benevolent</li> <li>• Are detached from human affairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pantheon of separate deities that oversee every aspect of society</li> </ul>
Hierarchy among Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Great High God has abstract deities above him</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One head deity who rules over other gods</li> </ul>
Relationship Between People and Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People can become deities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deities can procreate with humans, producing demigods</li> </ul>
Common Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inner peace</li> <li>• Balance between opposites (yin/yang)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War and love</li> <li>• Heroic action</li> </ul>
Afterlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A state of non-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tangible place, Hades</li> </ul>

**Legalism** Creating a sharp contrast to Confucianism and Daoism was the third philosophical tradition of China's Classical period, Legalism. As the name suggests, the philosophy of Legalism was less concerned with questions of the meaning of life, and more with how people behaved. Since human nature was understood to be essentially bad, Legalists believed that society needed a system of strict laws and punishments to control people. Because most citizens, according to Legalism, should live their lives as either farmers or soldiers, education was not considered to be especially necessary. Legalists argued that society should discourage people from becoming teachers, merchants, poets, or artists. Another tenet of legalism was collective responsibility of a family or community for every member. One should observe one's relatives and neighbors and turn them into authorities if they break the law.

Legalism was led by two philosophers, *Han Fei Zu* and *Li Si*. Their ideas struck a chord with many people during the often-violent Qin Dynasty (see below). However, after that dynasty ended and the following dynasty brought greater stability, Legalism faded. It failed to have the long-term impact of either Confucianism or Daoism.

## The Qin Dynasty in China

The instability of the Zhou ended when, in 221 B.C.E., an ambitious leader named Qin Shihuangdi raised his own army and defeated what remained of the Zhou leaders. One by one, he also conquered the nearby regional authorities,

taking control of all of China and establishing his own dynasty. The Qin (or Ch'in) dynasty was brief, lasting only until 207 B.C.E., but memorable—in part due to the cruelty of its leader.

Not content to just be king, the title claimed by Qin, *Shihuangdi*, means “first emperor.” He created a very centralized state with all of the government under his personal control. In particular, he abolished local laws and appointed magistrates to replace local leaders. Books that were not in keeping with Qin's own beliefs were burned, and hundreds of scholars were buried alive. Anyone who resisted his authority could be executed or sent into exile. Many dissenters were sent north, to work on building a network of walls to keep out invaders—workers who died while building these walls were buried within the walls themselves. Hundreds of thousands of people were conscripted to construct the northern walls and to toil on other infrastructure projects. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph connecting the Qin walls with the Great Wall of China. See pages 181 and 373.)

**Achievements of Qin Dynasty** Despite his despotism, Qin did much to change China in ways that won him praise.

- He expanded the size of the Chinese empire, mostly to the south and the west.
- He gave peasants the right to own land.
- He standardized the Chinese script, which had developed many local variations during the Shang dynasty, thereby making communication and trade easier.
- He standardized coinage as well as weights and measures. These steps greatly aided commerce.
- He ordered the building of canals and roads, which improved trade.

Qin's most remarkable legacy was not discovered until 1974 when his tomb was unearthed. Inside Qin's tomb, which had gone untouched for 2000 years, were more than 7,000 life-sized soldiers made out of terra-cotta—an army for the afterlife. Each soldier was unique, demonstrating a level of realism that had not been seen in Chinese art to this point. (Test Prep: List the differences and similarities between Qin's royal burial with the burial of the pharaohs of Egypt. See page 27.)

In 210 B.C.E., Qin died, and his son took the throne. However, four years later, in 206 B.C.E., a Qin general led a revolt. The rebels killed the emperor and the entire royal family, and the rebel general seized power. He and his family began the *Han Dynasty*, which lasted for more than 400 years.

## The Han Dynasty

*Han Wudi* (who ruled 141–87 B.C.E.) was the Han Dynasty's most significant emperor. He oversaw a vast expansion of the empire, as China invaded and took over Korea and northern Vietnam. Wudi also sent Chinese forces into Central Asia, almost all the way west to Bactria, to defeat the nomadic *Xiongnu*



The period during and following Wudi's rule is sometimes referred to as the *Pax Sinica*, Chinese Peace. During it, the country enjoyed peace, the economy grew, and the population increased. As the common people prospered, so did the rich, who created a thriving market for luxury goods.

**Silk Roads and Capital Cities** Silk production increased greatly under the Han. Because Chinese silk was of such high quality, silk and silk garments could be sold as far away as the Roman Empire, Mesopotamia, Persia, and India. The routes connecting China and these other lands became known as the *Silk Roads*. They would eventually bring Buddhism into China from India.

At the east end of the Silk Roads lay *Chang'an*, the capital and cultural center of the empire. Protected by a wall, this city of traders and bureaucrats featured beautiful parks, fine homes, and a few palaces. Civil unrest in Chang'an caused the government to move the capital to Luoyang in eastern China.

**Paper, Calendar, and Farming** Chinese science and technology prospered under Han rule. The Chinese invented paper around 100 C.E., calculated a year was 365.25 days, improved the iron plow, and developed a yoke that did not put pressure on an animal's windpipe, which made farming more productive.

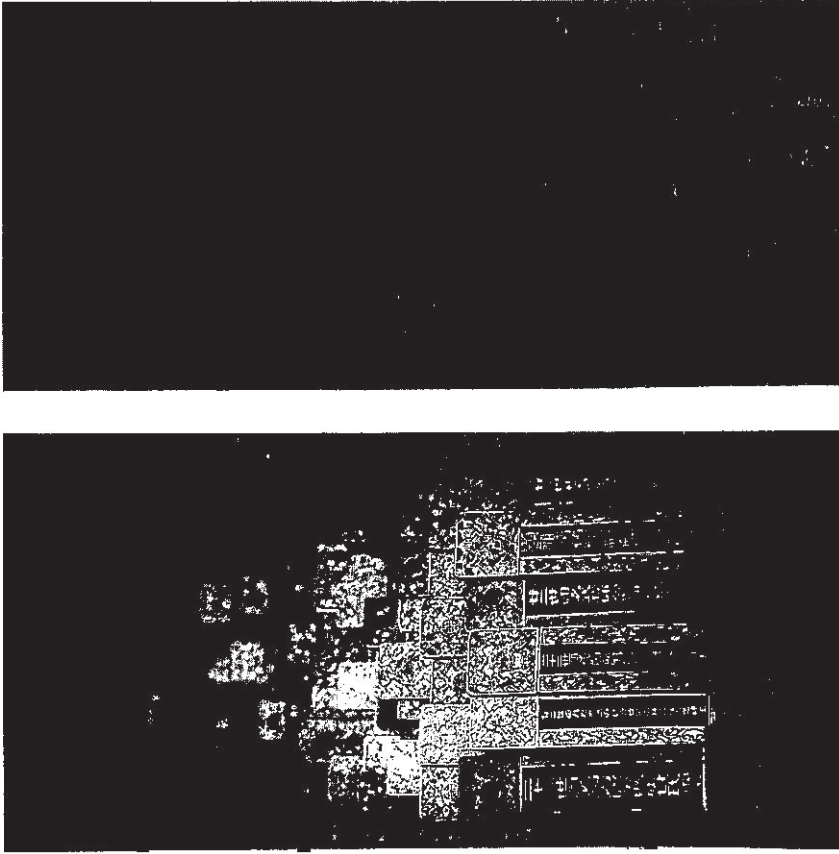
**Disease, Inequality, and Unrest** The Pax Sinica did not last. One problem for the late Han dynasty was the spread of diseases, which came to China along the Silk Roads with the movements of traders and other migrants. Smallpox, measles, and bubonic plague were the most destructive of these epidemic diseases, which reduced the population of China by as much as one-fourth.

Another problem was economic. Many small farmers lost their lands to large landowners to satisfy their debts, so inequality increased. One non-Han emperor, Wang Mang (who ruled 9–23 C.E.), attempted to redistribute land from large landowners to landless peasants. However, this land reform was not well received, creating more unrest and leading to his replacement by a member of the Han family. In 126 C.E., peasants began what became a series of revolts, which further weakened Han rule.

Subsequent Han emperors also failed to address the land distribution problem and the associated famines. This inspired more peasant uprisings, most notably the *Yellow Turban Rebellion*—so named because of the scarves worn by the peasants involved. The death toll probably reached several million, making it one of the bloodiest conflicts in the world before the 1900s. The dynasty came to an end when the emperor was overthrown in 220 C.E. and China was divided into three kingdoms.

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: DID MANY BELIEFS DEVELOP AT ONCE?

In just six hundred years, from 800 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E., Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Greek philosophy, and Jewish monotheism all emerged. In a 1949 book, German philosopher Karl Jaspers called these years the “axial age” because they formed the foundation for later



Source: Shutterstock

While Confucians honor early generations by keeping ancestor tablets in their homes (left), Daoists honor nature through painting (right).

Source: LACMA

peoples, who had been raiding Chinese villages for years. To maintain control of the new western lands, Wudi relocated landless Chinese farmers into Central Asia to establish agricultural colonies.

**Central Government** Meanwhile, at home, Wudi expanded the efficient, centralized government started by the Qin. One of his most important accomplishments was the introduction of a *civil service examination*. Under this system, people were hired based on their test-taking abilities instead of their personal or family connections. Because at first not many young men were qualified for government positions, Wudi created a national university to prepare them for employment. The combination of the exams and the university began China's tradition of having a well-trained and highly respected bureaucracy to administer government policies. As a result, China prospered for many years.