

# CHINESE “RELIGIONS”



## The Four Old-World River Valley Cultures





# **Brief overview of Chinese history**

- **Beginnings thru end of Shang dynasty 11<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE**  
**polytheism mixed ancestor worship**
- **Chou dynasty 11<sup>th</sup> cent BCE to CE**  
**supreme god over many and morality factor**
- **Religious cults CE to 11<sup>th</sup> century CE**  
**Buddhism and Taoism**
- **11th century CE to the present**  
**blending of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism**

# Chinese Religious Concepts

- **Many gods and spirits (strong animism Shen/Kuei)**
- **Yin/Yang**
- **Ancestor worship—elder reverence attitude**
- **Divination—predicting the future (see next slide)**
- **Shang Ti—morphs from revered ancestor into god**
- **Decline of Feudal System—8<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> BCE centuries**



**Tortoise shell use in divination**



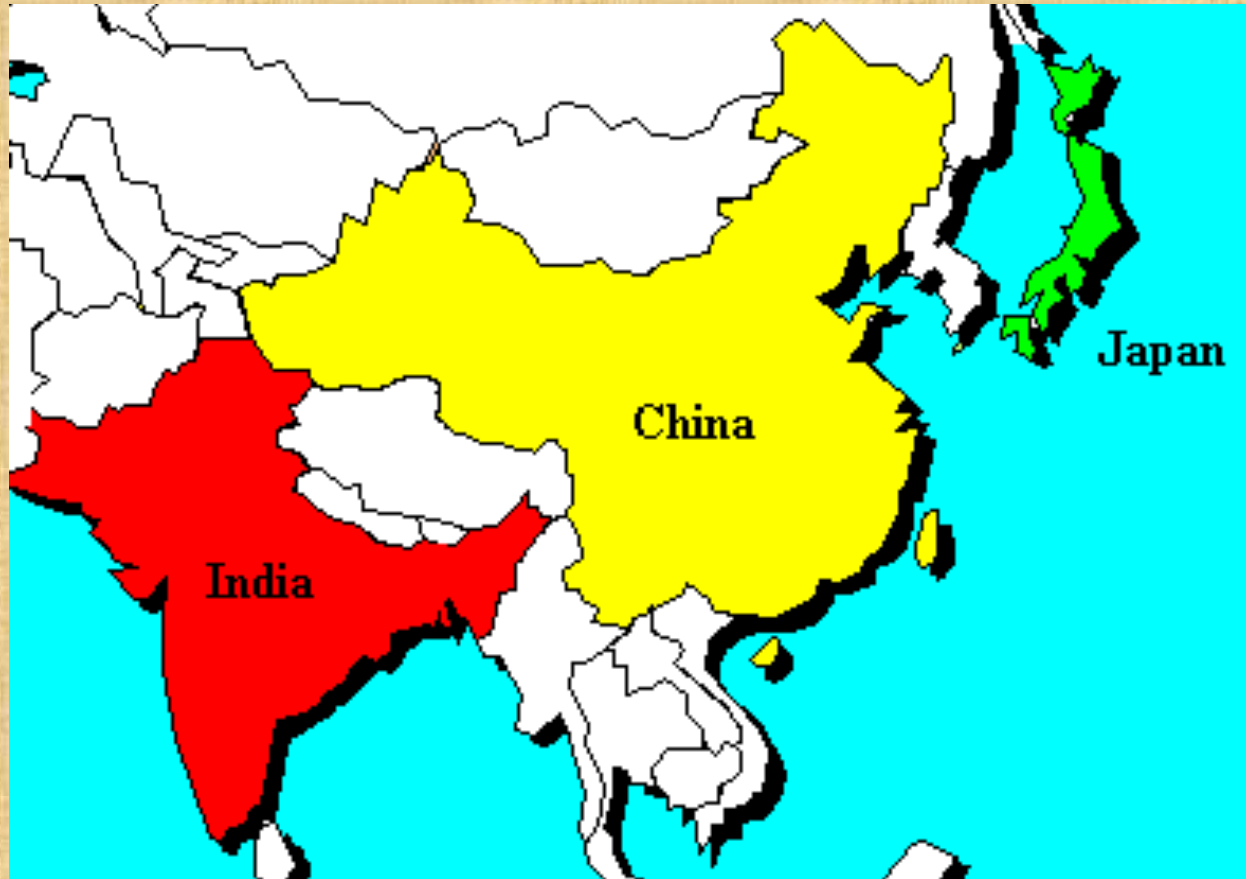
**Yin Yang**



**Yin Yang**



# Taoism—the way of nature



**Lao-tzu (Old Master) wanted to exit China and was stopped before he got to Tibet. There he was forced to write down his thoughts--*Tao Te Ching*.**



Lao-tzu

# Taoist concepts

- **Tao controls existence**
- **Life is a great thing (opposite of HBJ)—lengthen life is desirable via alchemy, etc.**
- **KIS—Henry David Thoreau of Asia**
- **Anti-hubris—tallest tree in woods parable**
- **God is like the Unmoved Mover of Plato**



**Confucius concepts  
Feudalistic (opposite  
of Taoists)**

# Life of Confucius

- **K'ung=master born 551 BCE**
- *Analects of Confucius*
- **Came from a once wealthy family but father died**
- **Married, fathered a child, divorced, became a teacher**
- **Entered the Duke of Lu's government and then forced out**
- **Wandered until Duke of Ai**
- **Died 479 BCE**

# Teaching of Confucius

- **Confucius may have been between Lao-tzu and Mo-tzu religiously**
- **Concerned with ethics and government**
- **Li=living in harmony with life (the feudal life)**
- **All society should follow li**
- **Jen=love and Shu=reciprocity**
- **Humans are by nature good if the government is good also**



**Legendary parallels  
between him and  
Confucius**

**Mencius 372-289 BCE**

# Legalists—Han Fei Tzu



**Han Fei Tzu (d.233 BCE)**



# Legalists

- **Utilitarianism—greatest good for the greatest number**
- **Machiavellians—people can't be trusted**
- **Rejected religion**
- **Han Fei Zi saw history was evolutionary and progressing to beyond the one before: “No country is permanently strong. Nor is any country permanently weak. If conformers to law are strong, the country is strong; if conformers to law are weak, the country is weak....”**

# Legalism continued

- **“Therefore, the intelligent sovereign makes the law select men and makes no arbitrary promotion himself. He makes the law measure merits and makes no arbitrary regulation himself. In consequence, able men cannot be obscured, bad characters cannot be disguised; falsely praised fellows cannot be advanced, wrongly defamed people cannot be degraded.”**

# Mohists

- **Mo-tzu (ca. 468-390 BCE)**
- **Love each other—Quakers**
- **Governments were to love their people**



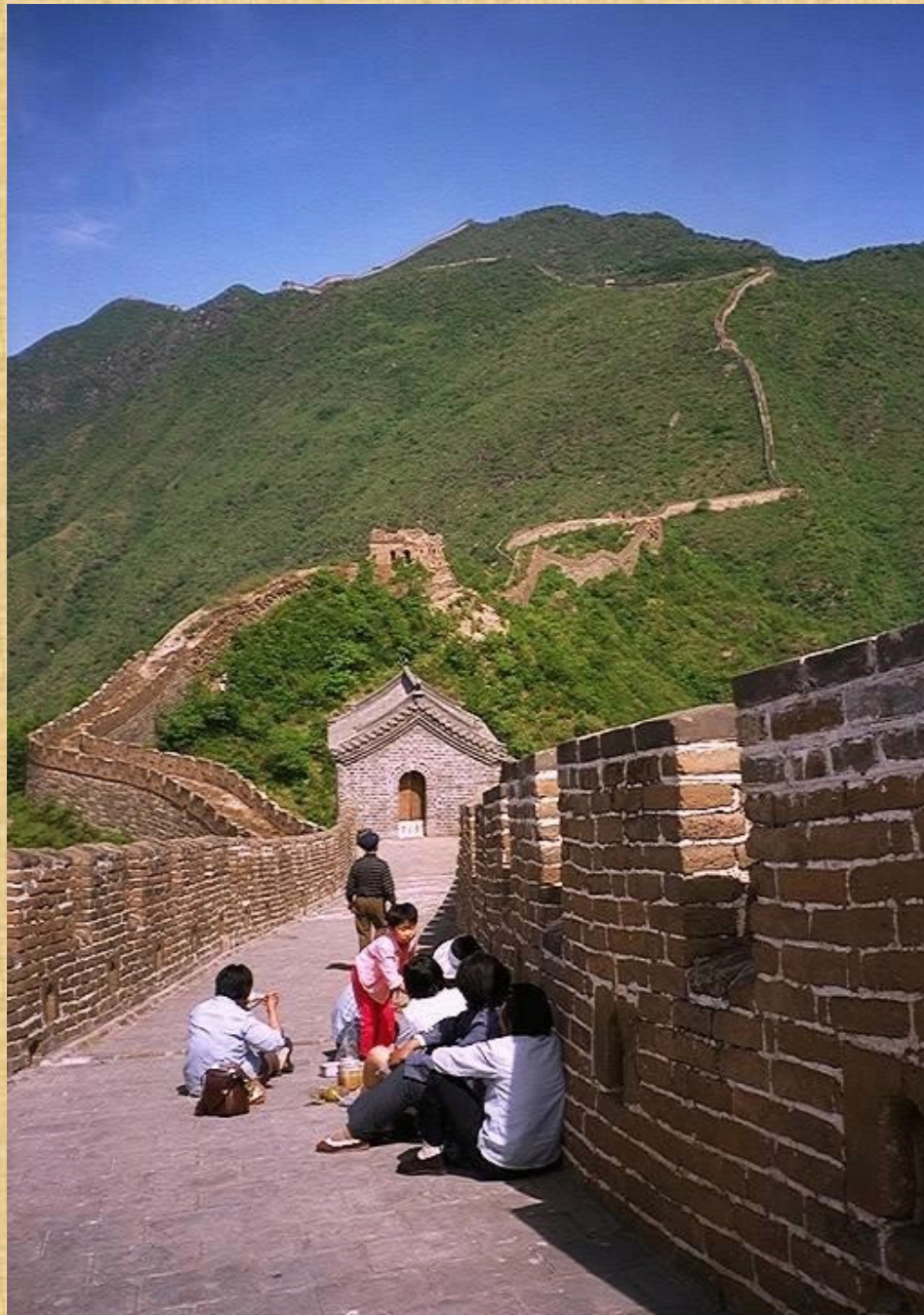
**Sun Tzu, *The Art of War***

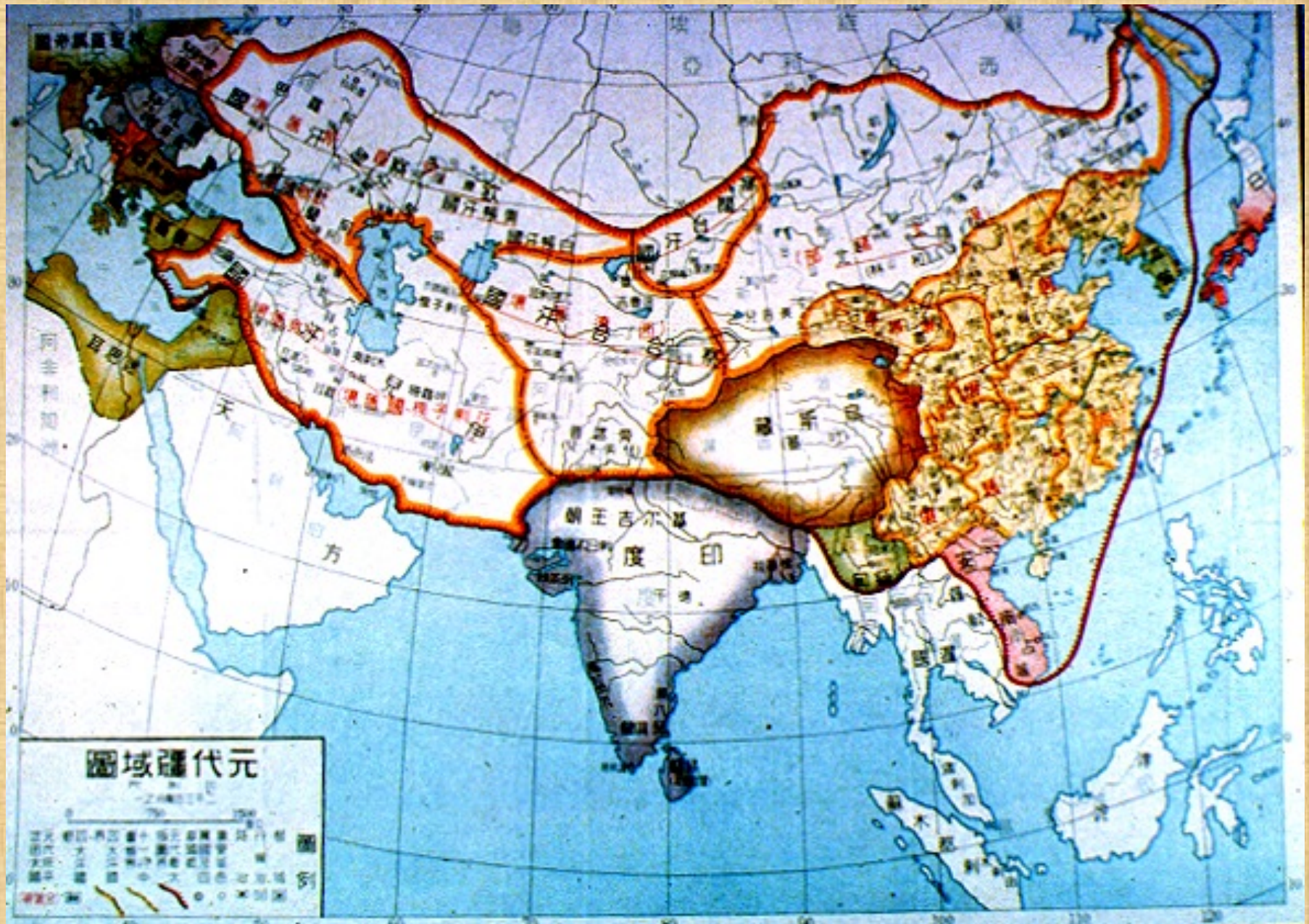
**“Thus, though we have heard of stupid haste in war, cleverness has never been seen associated with long delays. In all history, there is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare. Only one who knows the disastrous effects of a long war can realize the supreme, importance of rapidity in bringing it to a close. It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war who can thoroughly understand the profitable way of carrying it on.”**

**Sun Tzu, *The Art of War***



**The Great Wall**





Mongol Rule





**Genghis Khan**



**Kublai Khan**



**Foot-binding**



**Goddess of Democracy—  
Tiananmen Square**



# Some interesting links

- <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/ReIn270/FalunGong/FaLunGong.htm>
- <http://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/yinyang.htm>