



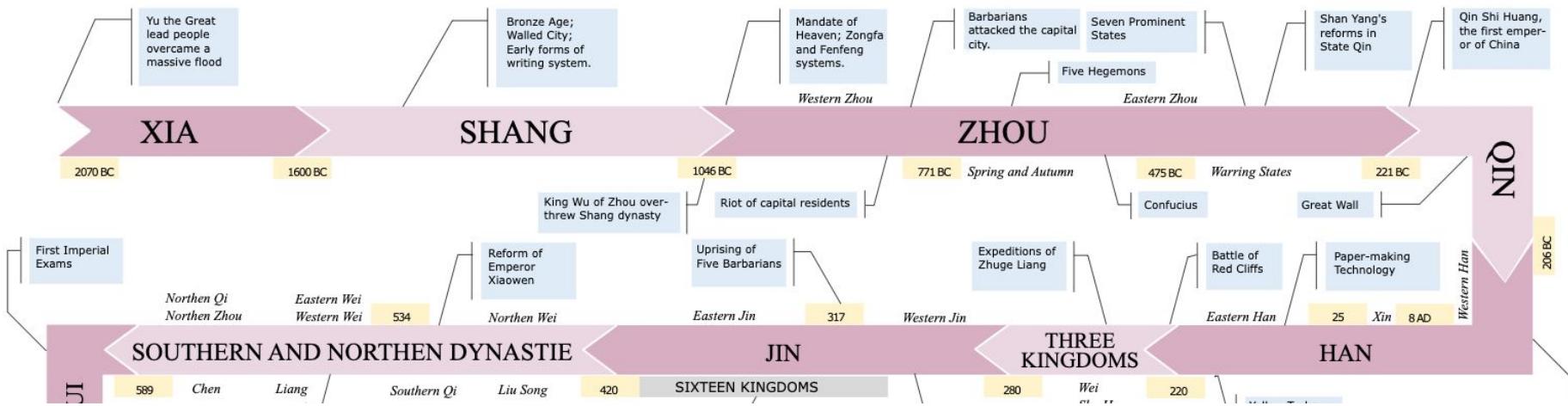
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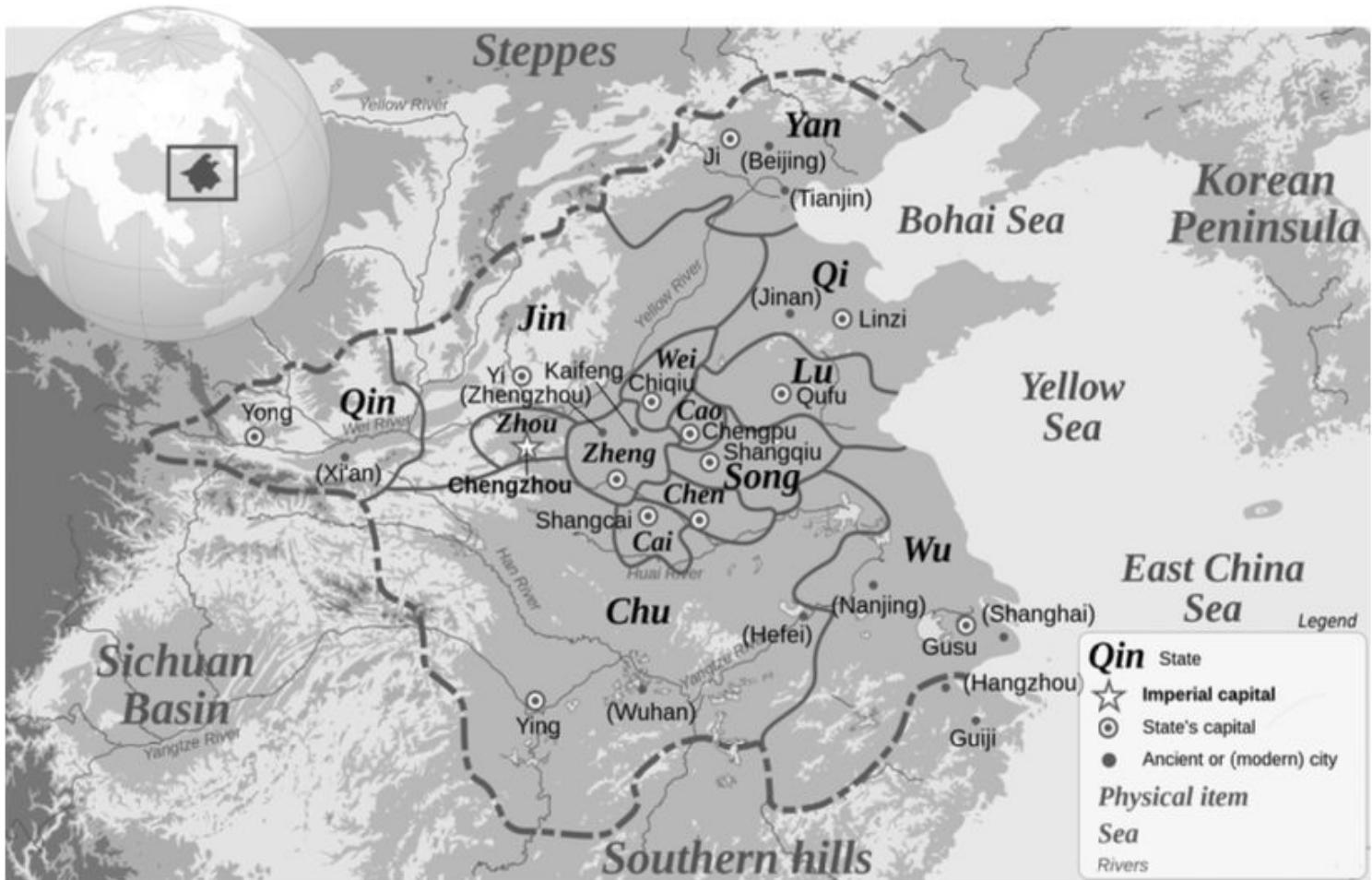


Week 3 The Analects

Gened1091: Classical Chinese Philosophy and Political Theory

TIMELINE OF CHINESE HISTORY



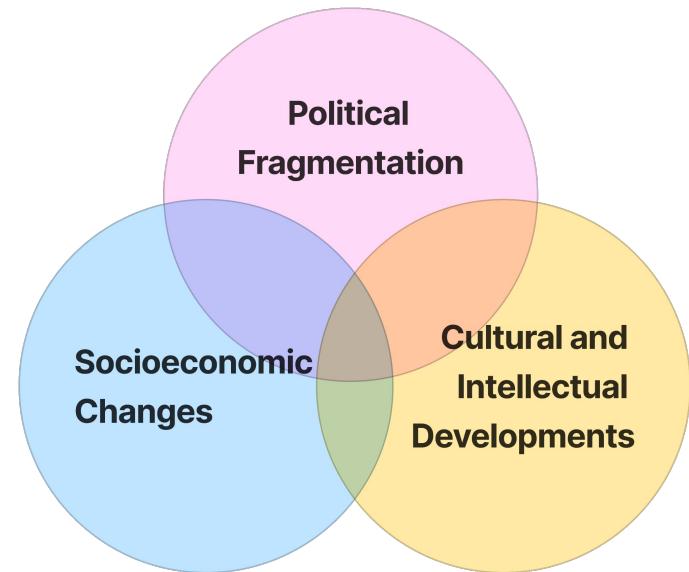


Map of China during the Spring and Autumn Period

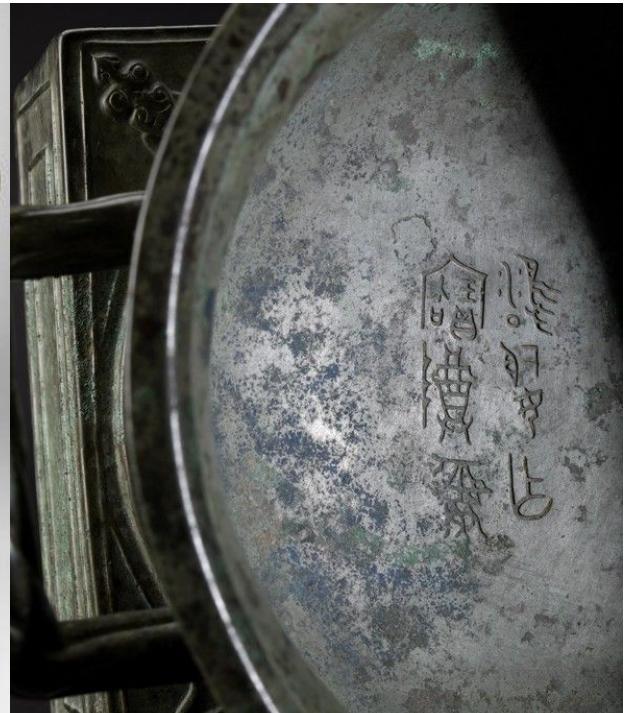
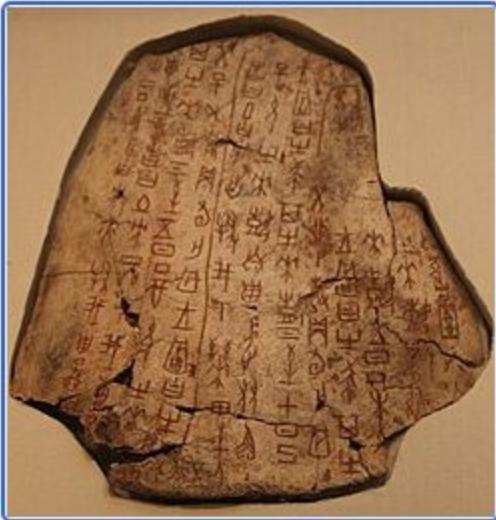


The Spring and Autumn Period (approximately 770-476 BCE)

- Political Fragmentation: Rise of regional states (Qin, Jin, Chu, Qi, Yan), Weakening of Zhou dynasty
- Socioeconomic Changes: Economic and technological growth (agriculture, military tech), Social changes (class system, roles of merchants/peasants)
- Cultural and Intellectual Developments: Emergence of philosophers (Confucius), New schools of thought.
 - Political fragmentation led to competition between states, driving economic and technological growth to gain an advantage.
 - The lack of a central authority provided a fertile ground for diverse philosophical ideas to emerge, as thinkers sought solutions to the period's instability and social changes.
 - New philosophical ideas influenced social and economic thinking, while economic growth and social changes provided context and challenges that philosophers addressed.



Oracle bone script



Script type	Logographic
Time period	c. 1250 – c. 1050 BC
Direction	Top-to-bottom vertically
Languages	Old Chinese
Related scripts	
Child systems	Seal script



History of Early Chinese Thoughts and Religion



- The Shang and Zhou people documented their spiritual interactions, leading to the belief that **past records could reveal effective human-spirit relationships**, influencing later Chinese views on history and precedent.
- Early Chinese thought, through the role of ancestral spirits, leaned toward a **"this-worldly" orientation, influencing Confucian views emphasizing tradition, roles within family, and societal harmony.**
- The Zhou dynasty saw **a shift from spiritual to natural explanations**, exemplified by the concept of Tiān ("Heaven"), transitioning from a deity to a representation of the universe's order, and the notion of Tiānmìng ("Heaven's Mandate"), justifying rule by virtue and ethics.
- The decline of the Western Zhou was attributed to moral failure and loss of virtue by a ruler, leading to political instability and the belief that **maintaining Heaven's Mandate required ethical conduct, a theme central to later Chinese philosophy.**

History of Early Chinese Thoughts and Religion



- The "hundred schools" period in early China featured a wide array of thinkers, showcasing diverse philosophical views and debates.
- Philosophical perspectives included defense of tradition, ethical sensibility theories, nature mysticism, consequentialism, egoism, and political theories of state organization and control.
- Thinkers offered various concepts of the good life, some advocating for the right societal conditions and others suggesting that striving for a good life corrupts it, promoting harmony with nature instead.
- Views on human nature varied significantly, even among founders of Confucianism like Kongzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi, who shared heritage but not interpretations.
- Intellectual diversity persisted beyond the classical period, with Chinese philosophy evolving and incorporating influences from non-Chinese traditions like Buddhism.



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The Analects



Historical Context Shaping Confucius' Philosophy

Late Zhou Dynasty and Political Instability

- By Confucius's time (551–479 BCE), the Zhou Dynasty's central authority had severely weakened, leading to political fragmentation.
- Power had decentralized to feudal lords; regional states grew strong and frequently engaged in conflicts, eroding imperial stability.
- Local rulers prioritized petty feuds over the greater good, leaving the Zhou realm in a state of chaos and uncertainty. This turbulent backdrop set the stage for calls to restore order and good governance.



Warring States Period and Its Influence

- After Confucius's lifetime, the **Warring States Period** (475–221 BCE) brought even greater turmoil as seven major states battled relentlessly for supremacy.
- Constant warfare during this era caused immense social upheaval and suffering, deepening the crisis of authority and order in Chinese society.
- The chaos also spurred a flourishing of philosophies during the **“Hundred Schools of Thought”** – thinkers (Confucian, Daoist, Legalist, etc.) competed to propose solutions for restoring stability and harmony. This intellectual competition was a direct response to the era's violence and uncertainty.



Social Hierarchy and Changes in Society

- The traditional aristocratic order was breaking down in late Zhou. Once-loyal nobles pursued their own ambitions; many aristocrats became inept and openly vied with their rulers for power and luxury.
- A new class of “**common gentlemen**” (the *shi*士) — educated men of lower nobility — emerged to fill administrative roles as the old nobility faltered. Men like Confucius, born into the *shi* class (between aristocracy and commoners), found opportunity in government service based on talent.
- These educated officials began questioning the basis of status. They asked whether ability and strength of character should define a person’s worth, rather than noble lineage, challenging the existing social hierarchy.
- Confucius, as a low-ranking aristocrat himself, sought to redefine social roles on merit and virtue. He believed that ethical, competent individuals (*junzi* “gentlemen”) deserved authority more than those of high birth who lacked moral integrity.



The Need for Ethical and Political Reform

- The widespread moral decay and constant warfare of late Zhou and Warring States times created an urgent sense that China needed ethical and political reform. In this climate of social upheaval, Confucius argued that only a return to virtue and proper order could reunify society.
- Confucius taught that rulers must govern by **moral example**. He likened good government to good parenting – a ruler should care for subjects with integrity and lead through personal virtue, not just laws or coercion. By “**guiding with virtue**” and observing ritual propriety (*li*), leaders would inspire people to behave ethically out of respect and shame, rather than fear of punishment.
- This philosophy was essentially a call to elevate moral leadership. Confucius and like-minded reformers wanted to change the political culture to favor the **virtuous and competent** in power. They believed a few upright leaders could have a beneficial effect on the fate of the many, restoring harmony and stability. In short, Confucius’s response to the chaos of his era was a blueprint for ethical governance and social order grounded in timeless virtues.



Intellectual Traditions before Confucius

- Confucius did not invent his ideas in isolation; he drew on centuries-old Chinese traditions. He studied and taught venerable Zhou Dynasty texts (later known as the **Five Classics** such as the Book of Documents, Book of Odes, and Book of Changes) that were already ancient in his time. By disseminating these classics, he aimed to “transmit” the wisdom of the past rather than create new doctrines.
- Key concepts in Confucian thought were rooted in earlier belief systems. For example, the ideal of **filial piety** (respect for parents/elders) and the notion of a **Mandate of Heaven** (a divine moral order supporting just rulers) were part of China’s heritage before Confucius. He inherited and emphasized these longstanding values in his teachings.
- Confucius also revered the early Zhou era as a golden age of virtue. He looked to models like the **Duke of Zhou** – a legendary statesman who exemplified benevolent, ethical rule – and sought to revive those principles of trustworthy, ritual-guided governance in his own turbulent times.



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Share your favorite passage from the *Analects*



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Learning & Self-Cultivation



2.15 The Master said , “ If you learn without thinking about what you have learned , you will be lost . If you think without learning , however , you will fall into danger . ”



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The Gentleman (Junzi)



4.16 The Master said , “The gentleman understands rightness , whereas the petty person understands profit . ”



Ritual



What is ritual? What are some examples of ritual done right?

3.12 “Sacrifice as if [they were] present” means that, when sacrificing to the spirits, you should comport yourself as if the spirits were present.

The Master said, “If I am not fully present at the sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice at all.”



Ritual



10.25 When he saw someone fasting or mourning, he invariably assumed a changed expression, even if they were an intimate acquaintance. When he saw someone wearing a ritual cap or a blind person, he would invariably display a respectful countenance, even if they were of low birth.

When riding past someone dressed in funeral garb, he would bow down and grasp the crossbar of his carriage. He would do so even if the mourner was a lowly peddler.

When presented food with full ritual propriety, he would invariably assume a solemn expression and rise from his seat.

He would also assume a solemn expression upon hearing a sudden clap of thunder or observing a fierce wind.



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Ritual & Music



3.3 The Master said , “A man who is not Good – what has he to do with ritual ? A man who is not Good – what has he to do with music ? ”



Governance & Order



2.3 The Master said , “ If you try to guide the common people with coercive regulations and keep them in line with punishments , the common people will become evasive and will have no sense of shame . If , however , you guide them with Virtue , and keep them in line by means of ritual , the people will have a sense of shame and will rectify themselves . ”



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Human Nature



17.2 The Master said , “ By nature people are similar ; they diverge as the result of practice .”



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Teachers & Disciples



7.1 The Master said, “I transmit rather than innovate. I trust in and love the ancient ways. I might thus humbly compare myself to Old Peng.”



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Virtue in Action



19.21 Zigong said , “ A gentleman's errors are like an eclipse of the sun or the moon : when he errs , everyone notices it , but when he makes amends , everyone looks up to him . ”



Recluses & Engagement



18.6 “... The gentleman takes office in order to do what is right , even though he already knows that the Way will not be realized . ”



Fate, Ritual, Words



20.3 Kongzi said , “One who does not understand fate lacks the means to become a gentleman . One who does not understand ritual lacks the means to take his place. One who does not understand words lacks the means to evaluate others . ”



Textual style



Let's take a look at the Analects Book Ten. What kind of a text is the *Analects*? How is it different from other philosophical or religious texts you have read before, and what are the possible advantages and disadvantages of presenting philosophical positions in this way?



Textual style

11.22 Zilu asked, “Upon learning of something that needs to be done, should one immediately take care of it?”

The Master replied, “As long as one’s father and elder brothers are still alive, how could one possibly take care of it immediately?”

[On a later occasion] Ran Qiu asked, “Upon learning of something that needs to be done, should one immediately take care of it?”

The Master replied, “Upon learning of it, you should immediately take care of it.” Zihua inquired, “When Zilu asked you whether or not one should immediately take care of something upon learning of it, you told him one should not, as long as one’s father and elder brothers were still alive. When Ran Qiu asked the same question, however, you told him that one should immediately take care of it. I am confused, and humbly ask to have this explained to me.”

The Master said, “Ran Qiu is overly cautious, and so I wished to urge him on. Zilu, on the other hand, is too impetuous, and so I sought to hold him back.”



Goodness



What is “Goodness”?

6.30 Zigong said, “If there were one able to bestow much upon the common people and bring succor to the multitudes, what would you make of him? Could such a person be called Good?”

The Master said, “Why stop at Good? Such a person should surely be called a sage! Even someone like Yao or Shun would find such a task daunting. Desiring to take his stand, one who is Good helps others to take their stand; wanting to realize himself, he helps others to realize themselves. Being able to take what is near at hand as an analogy could perhaps be called the method of Goodness.”



Goodness



What is “Goodness”?

12.1 Yan Hui asked about Goodness. The Master said, “Restraining yourself and returning to the rites constitutes Goodness. If for one day you managed to restrain yourself and return to the rites, in this way you could lead the entire world back to Goodness. The key to achieving Goodness lies within yourself—how could it come from others?” Yan Hui asked, “May I inquire as to the specifics?” The Master said, “Do not look unless it is in accordance with ritual; do not listen unless it is in accordance with ritual; do not speak unless it is in accordance with ritual; do not move unless it is in accordance with ritual.” Yan Hui replied, “Although I am not quick to understand, I ask permission to devote myself to this teaching.”



Joy



Why is “joy” so important in the Analects?

7.19 The Duke of She asked Zilu about Kongzi. Zilu had no reply.
[Upon Zilu's return], the Master said, “Why did you not just say: ‘He is the type of person who is so passionate that he forgets to eat, whose joy renders him free of worries, and who grows old without noticing the passage of the years.’”



Joy



Why is “joy” so important in the Analects?

1.1 The Master said, “To learn, and then have occasion to practice what you have learned—is this not satisfying? To have friends arrive from afar— is this not a joy? To be patient even when others do not understand—is this not the mark of the gentleman?”



how it is humans who broaden the Way?

15.29 The Master said, “Human beings can broaden the Way—it is not the Way that broadens human beings.”



Post a reflection on Ed

- PROMPT: Apply one concept from the Analects to a real-world scenario and share your thoughts. You may either agree or disagree with Confucius' ideas. For example, Confucius' concept of ritual can be applied to thinking through XYZ. Confucius' argument is convincing/unconvincing because of XYZ.

Post it on Ed Discussion under “Sections” - “Week 2 Analects” - YOUR SECTION

- Submit the link of your post under Assignment