

= History of the Great Wall of China =

The history of the Great Wall of China began when fortifications built by various states during the Spring and Autumn (771 ? 476 BC) and Warring States periods (475 ? 221 BC) were connected by the first emperor of China , Qin Shi Huang , to protect his newly founded Qin dynasty (221 ? 206 BC) against incursions by nomads from Inner Asia . The walls were built of rammed earth , constructed using forced labour , and by 212 BC ran from Gansu to the coast of southern Manchuria .

Later dynasties adopted different policies towards northern frontier defense . The Han (202 BC ? 220 AD) , the Northern Qi (550 ? 574) , the Sui (589 ? 618) , and particularly the Ming (1369 ? 1644) were among those that rebuilt , re-manned , and expanded the Walls , although they rarely followed Qin 's routes . The Han extended the fortifications furthest to the west , the Qi built about 1 000 kilometres (990 mi) of new walls , while the Sui mobilised over a million men in their wall-building efforts . Conversely , the Tang (618 ? 907) , the Song (960 ? 1279) , the Yuan (1271 ? 1368) , and the Qing (1644 ? 1911) mostly did not build frontier walls , instead opting for other solutions to the Inner Asian threat like military campaigning and diplomacy .

Although a useful deterrent against raids , at several points throughout its history the Great Wall failed to stop enemies , including in 1644 when the Manchu Qing marched through the gates of Shanhai Pass and replaced the most ardent of the wall-building dynasties , the Ming , as rulers of China .

The Great Wall of China visible today largely dates from the Ming dynasty , as they rebuilt much of the wall in stone and brick , often extending its line through challenging terrain . Some sections remain in relatively good condition or have been renovated , while others have been damaged or destroyed for ideological reasons , deconstructed for their building materials , or lost due to the ravages of time . For long an object of fascination for foreigners , the wall is now a revered national symbol and a popular tourist destination .

= Geographical considerations =

The conflict between the Chinese and the nomads , from which the need for the Great Wall arose , stemmed from differences in geography . The 15 ° isohyet marks the extent of settled agriculture , dividing the fertile fields of China to the south and the semi-arid grasslands of Inner Asia to the north . The climates and the topography of the two regions led to distinct modes of societal development .

According to the model by sinologist Karl August Wittfogel , the loess soils of Shaanxi made it possible for the Chinese to develop irrigated agriculture early on . Although this allowed them to expand into the lower reaches of the Yellow River valley , such extensive waterworks on an ever-increasing scale required collective labour , something that could only be managed by some form of bureaucracy . Thus the scholar-bureaucrats came to the fore to keep track of the income and expenses of the granaries . Walled cities grew up around the granaries for reasons of defence along with ease of administration ; they kept invaders out and ensured that citizens remained within . These cities combined to become feudal states , which eventually united to become an empire . Likewise , according to this model , walls not only enveloped cities as time went by , but also lined the borders of the feudal states and eventually the whole Chinese empire to provide protection against raids from the agrarian northern steppes .

The steppe societies of Inner Asia , whose climate favoured a pastoral economy , stood in stark contrast to the Chinese mode of development . As animal herds are migratory by nature , communities could not afford to be stationary and therefore evolved as nomads . According to the influential Mongolist Owen Lattimore this lifestyle proved to be incompatible with the Chinese economic model . As the steppe population grew , pastoral agriculture alone could not support the population , and tribal alliances needed to be maintained by material rewards . For these needs , the nomads had to turn to the settled societies to get grains , metal tools , and luxury goods , which they could not produce by themselves . If denied trade by the settled peoples , the nomads would resort

to raiding or even conquest .

Potential nomadic incursion from three main areas of Inner Asia caused concern to northern China : Mongolia to the north , Manchuria to the northeast , and Xinjiang to the northwest . Of the three , China 's chief concern since the earliest times had been Mongolia ? the home of many of the country 's fiercest enemies including the Xiongnu , the Xianbei , the Khitans , and the Mongols . The Gobi Desert , which accounts for two @-@ thirds of Mongolia 's area , divided the main northern and southern grazing lands and pushed the pastoral nomads to the fringes of the steppe . On the southern side (Inner Mongolia) , this pressure brought the nomads into contact with China .

For the most part , barring intermittent passes and valleys (the major one being the corridor through Zhangjiakou and the Juyong Pass) , the North China Plain remained shielded from the Mongolian steppe by the Yin Mountains . However , if this defence were breached , China 's flat terrain offered no protection to the cities on the plain , including the imperial capitals of Beijing , Kaifeng , and Luoyang . Heading west along the Yin Mountains , the range ends where the Yellow River circles northwards upstream in the area known as the Ordos Loop ? technically part of the steppe , but capable of irrigated agriculture . Although the Yellow River formed a theoretical natural boundary with the north , such a border so far into the steppe was difficult to maintain . The lands south of the Yellow River ? the Hetao , the Ordos Desert , and the Loess Plateau ? provided no natural barriers on the approach to the Wei River valley , the oft @-@ called cradle of Chinese civilization where the ancient capital Xi 'an lay . As such , control of the Ordos remained extremely important for the rulers of China : not only for potential influence over the steppe , but also for the security of China proper . The region 's strategic importance combined with its untenability led many dynasties to place their first walls here .

Although Manchuria is home to the agricultural lands of the Liao River valley , its location beyond the northern mountains relegated it to the relative periphery of Chinese concern . When Chinese state control became weak , at various points in history Manchuria fell under the control of the forest peoples of the area , including the Jurchens and the Manchus . The most crucial route that links Manchuria and the North China Plain is a narrow coastal strip of land , wedged between the Bohai Sea and the Yan Mountains , called the Shanhai Pass (literally the " mountain and sea pass ") . The pass gained much importance during the later dynasties , when the capital was set in Beijing , a mere 300 kilometres (190 mi) away . In addition to the Shanhai Pass , a handful of mountain passes also provide access from Manchuria into China through the Yan Mountains , chief among them the Gubeikou and Xifengkou (Chinese : ???) .

Xinjiang , considered part of the Turkestan region , consists of an amalgamation of deserts , oases , and dry steppe barely suitable for agriculture . When influence from the steppe powers of Mongolia waned , the various Central Asian oasis kingdoms and nomadic clans like the Göktürks and Uyghurs were able to form their own states and confederations that threatened China at times . China proper is connected to this area by the Hexi Corridor , a narrow string of oases bounded by the Gobi Desert to the north and the high Tibetan Plateau to the south . In addition to considerations of frontier defence , the Hexi Corridor also formed an important part of the Silk Road trade route . Thus it was also in China 's economic interest to control this stretch of land , and hence the Great Wall 's western terminus is in this corridor ? the Yumen Pass during Han times and the Jiayu Pass during the Ming dynasty and thereafter .

= = Pre @-@ Imperial China (7th century ? 221 BC) = =

One of the first mentions of a wall built against northern invaders is found in a poem , dated from the seventh century BC , recorded in the Classic of Poetry . The poem tells of a king , now identified as King Xuan (r . 827 ? 782 BC) of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046 ? 771 BC) , who commanded General Nan Zhong (??) to build a wall in the northern regions to fend off the Xianyun . The Xianyun , whose base of power was in the Ordos region , were regarded as part of the charioteering Rong tribes , and their attacks aimed at the early Zhou capital region of Haojing were probably the reason for King Xuan 's response . Nan Zhong 's campaign was recorded as a great victory . However , only a few years later in 771 BC another branch of the Rong people , the

Quanrong , responded to a summons by the renegade Marquess of Shen by over @-@ running the Zhou defences and laying waste to the capital . The cataclysmic event killed King Xuan 's successor King You (795 ? 771 BC) , forced the court to move the capital east to Chengzhou (?? , later known as Luoyang) a year later , and thus ushered in the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770 ? 256 BC) . Most importantly , the fall of Western Zhou redistributed power to the states that had acknowledged Zhou 's nominal rulership . The rule of the Eastern Zhou dynasty was marked by bloody interstate anarchy . With smaller states being annexed and larger states waging constant war upon one another , many rulers came to feel the need to erect walls to protect their borders . Of the earliest textual reference to such a wall was the State of Chu 's wall of 656 BC , 1 @, @ 400 metres (4 @, @ 600 ft) of which were excavated in southern Henan province in the modern era . The State of Qi also had fortified borders up by the 7th century BC , and the extant portions in Shandong province had been christened the Great Wall of Qi . The State of Wei built two walls , the western one completed in 361 BC and the eastern in 356 BC , with the extant western wall found in Hancheng , Shaanxi . Even non @-@ Chinese peoples built walls , such as the Di state of Zhongshan and the Yiqu Rong (??) , whose walls were intended to defend against the State of Qin .

Of these walls , those of the northern states Yan , Zhao , and Qin were connected by Qin Shi Huang when he united the Chinese states in 221 BC .

The State of Yan , the easternmost of the three northern states , began to erect walls after the general Qin Kai drove the Donghu people back " a thousand li " during the reign of King Zhao (??? ; r . 311 ? 279 BC) . The Yan wall stretched from the Liaodong peninsula , through Chifeng , and into northern Hebei , possibly bringing its western terminus near the Zhao walls . Another Yan wall was erected to the south to defend against the Zhao ; it was southwest of present @-@ day Beijing and ran parallel to the Juma River for several dozen miles .

The Zhao walls to the north were built under King Wuling of Zhao (r . 325 ? 299 BC) , whose groundbreaking introduction of nomadic cavalry into his army reshaped Chinese warfare and gave Zhao an initial advantage over his opponents . He attacked the Xiongnu tribes of Linhu (??) and Loufan (??) to the north , then waged war on the state of Zhongshan until it was annexed in 296 BC . In the process , he constructed the northernmost fortified frontier deep in nomadic territory . The Zhao walls were dated in the 1960s to be from King Wuling 's reign : a southern long wall in northern Henan encompassing the Yanmen Pass ; a second line of barricades encircling the Ordos Loop , extending from Zhangjiakou in the east to the ancient fortress of Gaoque (??) in the Urad Front Banner ; and a third , northernmost line along the southern slopes of the Yin Mountains , extending from Qinghe in the east , passing north of Hohhot , and into Baotou .

Qin was originally a state on the western fringe of the Chinese political sphere , but it grew into a formidable power in the later parts of the Warring States period when it aggressively expanded in all directions . In the north , the state of Wei and the Yiqu built walls to protect themselves from Qin aggression , but were still unable to stop Qin from eating into their territories . The Qin reformist Shang Yang forced the Wei out of their walled area west of the Yellow River in 340 BC , and King Huiwen of Qin (r . 338 ? 311 BC) took 25 Yiqu forts in a northern offensive . When King Huiwen died , his widow the Queen Dowager Xuan (???) acted as regent because the succeeding sons were deemed too young to govern . During the reign of King Zhaoxiang (r . 306 ? 251 BC) , the queen dowager apparently entered illicit relations with the Yiqu king and gave birth to two of his sons , but later tricked and killed the Yiqu king . Following that coup , the Qin army marched into Yiqu territory at the queen dowager 's orders ; the Qin annihilated the Yiqu remnants and thus came to possess the Ordos region . At this point the Qin built a wall around their new territories to defend against the true nomads even further north , incorporating the Wei walls . As a result , an estimated total of 1 @, @ 775 kilometres (1 @, @ 103 mi) of Qin walls (including spurts) extended from southern Gansu to the bank of the Yellow River in the Jungar Banner , close to the border with Zhao at the time .

The walls , known as Changcheng (??) ? literally " long walls " , but often translated as " Great Wall " ? were mostly constructed of tamped earth , with some parts built with stones . Where natural barriers like ravines and rivers sufficed for defence , the walls were erected sparingly , but long fortified lines were laid where such advantageous terrains did not exist . Often in addition to the wall

, the defensive system included garrisons and beacon towers inside the wall , and watchtowers outside at regular intervals . In terms of defence , the walls were generally effective at countering cavalry shock tactics , but there are doubts as to whether these early walls were actually defensive in nature . Nicola Di Cosmo points out that the northern frontier walls were built far to the north and included traditionally nomadic lands , and so rather than being defensive , the walls indicate the northward expansions of the three northern states and their desire to safeguard their recent territorial acquisitions . This theory is supported by the archeological discovery of nomadic artifacts within the walls , suggesting the presence of pre @-@ existing or conquered barbarian societies . It is entirely possible , as Western scholars like di Cosmo and Lattimore suggest , that nomadic aggression against the Chinese in the coming centuries was partly caused by Chinese expansionism during this period .

= = Qin dynasty (221 ? 206 BC) = =

In 221 BC , the state of Qin completed its conquest over the other Warring States and united China under Qin Shi Huang , the first emperor of China . These conquests , combined with the Legalist reforms started by Shang Yang in the 4th century BC , transformed China from a loose confederation of feudal states to an authoritarian empire . With the transformation , Qin became able to command a far greater assembly of labourers to be used in public works than the prior feudal kingdoms . Also , once unification was achieved , Qin found itself in possession of a large professional army with no more internal enemies to fight and thus had to find a new use for them . Soon after the conquests , in the year 215 BC , the emperor sent the famed general Meng Tian to the Ordos region to drive out the Xiongnu nomads settled there , who had risen from beyond the fallen marginal states along the northern frontier . Qin 's campaign against the Xiongnu was preemptive in nature , since there was no pressing nomadic menace to be faced at the time ; its aim was to annexe the ambiguous territories of the Ordos and to clearly define the Qin 's northern borders . Once the Xiongnu were chased away , Meng Tian introduced 30 @,@ 000 settler families to colonize the newly conquered territories .

Wall configurations were changed to reflect the new borders under the Qin . General Meng Tian erected walls beyond the northern loop of the Yellow River , effectively linking the border walls of Qin , Zhao , and Yan . Concurrent to the building of the frontier wall was the destruction of the walls within China that used to divide one warring state from another ? contrary to the outer walls , which were built to stabilize the newly united China , the inner walls threatened the unity of the empire . In the following year , 214 BC , Qin Shi Huang ordered new fortifications to be built along the Yellow River to the west of the Ordos while work continued in the north . This work was completed probably by 212 BC , signalled by Qin Shi Huang 's imperial tour of inspection and the construction of the Direct Road (??) connecting the capital Xianyang with the Ordos . The result was a series of long walls running from Gansu to the seacoast in Manchuria .

Details of the construction were not found in the official histories , but it could be inferred that the construction conditions were made especially difficult by the long stretches of mountains and semi @-@ desert that the Great Wall traversed , the sparse populations of these areas , and the frigid winter climate . Although the walls were rammed earth , so the bulk of the building material could be found in situ , transportation of additional supplies and labour remained difficult for the reasons named above . The sinologist Derk Bodde posits in *The Cambridge History of China* that " for every man whom Meng Tian could put to work at the scene of actual construction , dozens must have been needed to build approaching roads and to transport supplies . " This is supported by the Han dynasty statesman Zhufu Yan 's description of Qin Shi Huang 's Ordos project in 128 BC :

... the land was brackish and arid , crops could not be grown on them At the time , the young men being drafted were forced to haul boats and barges loaded with baggage trains upstream to sustain a steady supply of food and fodder to the front Commencing at the departure point a man and his animal could carry thirty zhong (about 176 kilograms (388 lb)) of food supply , by the time they arrived at the destination , they merely delivered one dan (about 29 kilograms (64 lb)) of supply When the populace had become tired and weary they started to dissipate and abscond .

The orphans , the frail , the widowed and the seniors were desperately trying to escape from their appallingly derelict state and died on the wayside as they wandered away from their home . People started to revolt .

The settlement of the north continued up to Qin Shi Huang 's death in 210 BC , upon which Meng Tian was ordered to commit suicide in a succession conspiracy . Before killing himself , Meng Tian expressed regret for his walls : " Beginning at Lintao and reaching to Liaodong , I built walls and dug moats for more than ten thousand li ; was it not inevitable that I broke the earth 's veins along the way ? This then was my offense . "

Meng Tian 's settlements in the north were abandoned , and the Xiongnu nomads moved back into the Ordos Loop as the Qin empire became consumed by widespread rebellion due to public discontent . Owen Lattimore concluded that the whole project relied upon military power to enforce agriculture on a land more suited for herding , resulting in " the anti @-@ historical paradox of attempting two mutually exclusive forms of development simultaneously " that was doomed to fail .

= = Han dynasty (206 BC ? 220 AD) = =

In 202 BC , the former peasant Liu Bang emerged victorious from the Chu ? Han Contention that followed the rebellion that toppled the Qin dynasty , and proclaimed himself Emperor of the Han dynasty , becoming known as Emperor Gaozu of Han (r . 202 ? 195 BC) to posterity . Unable to address the problem of the resurgent Xiongnu in the Ordos region through military means , Emperor Gaozu was forced to appease the Xiongnu . In exchange for peace , the Han offered tributes along with princesses to marry off to the Xiongnu chiefs . These diplomatic marriages would become known as heqin , and the terms specified that the Great Wall (determined to be either the Warring States period Qin state wall or a short stretch of wall south of Yanmen Pass) was to serve as the line across which neither party would venture . In 162 BC , Gaozu 's son Emperor Wen clarified the agreement , suggesting the Xiongnu chanyu held authority north of the Wall and the Han emperor held authority south of it . Sima Qian , the author of the Records of the Grand Historian , describes the result of this agreement as one of peace and friendship : " from the chanyu downwards , all the Xiongnu grew friendly with the Han , coming and going along the Long Wall " . However , Chinese records show that the Xiongnu often did not respect the agreement , as the Xiongnu cavalry numbering up to 100 @, @ 000 made several intrusions into Han territory despite the intermarriage .

To Chinese minds , the heqin policy was humiliating and ran contrary to the Sinocentric world order like " a person hanging upside down " , as the statesman Jia Yi (d . 169 BC) puts it . These sentiments manifested themselves in the Han court in the form of the pro @-@ war faction , who advocated the reversal of Han 's policy of appeasement . By the reign of Emperor Wu (r . 141 ? 87 BC) , the Han felt comfortable enough to go to war with the Xiongnu . After a botched attempt at luring the Xiongnu army into an ambush at the Battle of Mayi in 133 BC , the era of heqin @-@ style appeasement was broken and the Han ? Xiongnu War went into full swing .

As the Han ? Xiongnu War progressed in favour of the Han , the Wall became maintained and extended beyond Qin lines . In 127 BC , General Wei Qing invaded the much @-@ contested Ordos region as far as the Qin fortifications set up by Meng Tian . In this way , Wei Qing reconquered the irrigable lands north of the Ordos and restored the spur of defences protecting that territory from the steppe . In addition to rebuilding the walls , archeologists believe that the Han also erected thousands of kilometres of walls from Hebei to Inner Mongolia during Emperor Wu 's reign . The fortifications here include embankments , beacon stations , and forts , all constructed with a combination of tamped @-@ earth cores and stone frontages . From the Ordos Loop , the sporadic and non @-@ continuous Han Great Wall followed the northern edge of the Hexi Corridor through the cities of Wuwei , Zhangye , and Jiuquan , leading into the Juyan Lake Basin , and terminating in two places : the Yumen Pass in the north , or the Yang Pass to the south , both in the vicinity of Dunhuang . Yumen Pass was the most westerly of all Han Chinese fortifications ? further west than the western terminus of the Ming Great Wall at Jiayu Pass , about 460 kilometres (290 mi) to the east . The garrisons of the watchtowers on the wall were supported by civilian farming and by military agricultural colonies known as tuntian . Behind this line of fortifications , the Han government

was able to maintain its settlements and its communications to the Western Regions in central Asia , generally secure from attacks from the north .

The campaigns against the Xiongnu and other nomadic peoples of the west exhausted the imperial treasury , and the expansionist policies were reverted in favour of peace under Emperor Wu 's successors . The peace was largely respected even when the Han throne was usurped by the minister Wang Mang in 9 AD , beginning a brief 15 @-@ year interregnum known as the Xin dynasty (9 ? 23) . Despite high tensions between the Xin and the Xiongnu resulting in the deployment of 300 @,@ 000 men on the Great Wall , no major fighting broke out beyond minor raids . Instead , popular discontent led to banditry and , ultimately , full @-@ scale rebellion . The civil war ended with the Liu clan on the throne again , beginning the Eastern Han dynasty (25 ? 220) .

The restorer Emperor Guangwu (r . 25 ? 57 AD) initiated several projects to consolidate his control within the frontier regions . Defense works were established to the east of the Yanmen Pass , with a line of fortifications and beacon fires stretching from Pingcheng County (present @-@ day Datong) through the valley of the Sanggan River to Dai County , Shanxi . By 38 AD , as a result of raids by the Xiongnu further to the west against the Wei River valley , orders were given for a series of walls to be constructed as defences for the Fen River , the southward course of the Yellow River , and the region of the former imperial capital , Chang 'an . These constructions were defensive in nature , which marked a shift from the offensive walls of the preceding Emperor Wu and the rulers of the Warring States . By the early 40s AD the northern frontiers of China had undergone drastic change : the line of the imperial frontier followed not the advanced positions conquered by Emperor Wu but the rear defences indicated roughly by the modern (Ming dynasty) Great Wall . The Ordos region , northern Shanxi , and the upper Luan River basin around Chengde were abandoned and left to the control of the Xiongnu . The rest of the frontier remained somewhat intact until the end of the Han dynasty , with the Dunhuang manuscripts (discovered in 1900) indicating that the military establishment in the northwest was maintained for most of the Eastern Han period .

= = Period of Disunity to the Sui dynasty (220 ? 618) = =

Following the end of the Han dynasty in 220 , China disintegrated into warlord states , which in 280 were briefly reunited under the Western Jin dynasty (265 ? 316) . There are ambiguous accounts of the Jin rebuilding the Qin wall , but these walls apparently offered no resistance during the Wu Hu uprising , when the nomadic tribes of the steppe evicted the Chinese court from northern China . What followed was a succession of short @-@ lived states in northern China known as the Sixteen Kingdoms , until they were all consolidated by the Xianbei @-@ led Northern Wei dynasty (386 ? 535) .

As Northern Wei became more economically dependent on agriculture , the Xianbei emperors made a conscious decision to adopt Chinese customs , including passive methods of frontier defence . In 423 , a defence line over 2 @,@ 000 li (1 @,@ 080 kilometres (670 mi)) long was built to resist the Rouran ; its path roughly followed the old Zhao wall from Chicheng County in Hebei Province to Wuyuan County , Inner Mongolia . In 446 , 100 @,@ 000 men were put to work building an inner wall from Yanqing , passing south of the Wei capital Pingcheng , and ending up near Pingguan on the eastern bank of the Yellow River . The two walls formed the basis of the double @-@ layered Xuanfu ? Datong wall system that protected Beijing a thousand years later during the Ming dynasty .

The Northern Wei collapsed in 535 due to civil insurrection to be eventually succeeded by the Northern Qi (550 ? 575) and Northern Zhou (557 ? 580) . Faced with the threat of the Göktürks from the north , from 552 to 556 the Qi built up to 3 @,@ 000 li (about 1 @,@ 600 kilometres (990 mi)) of wall from Shanxi to the sea at Shanhai Pass . Over the course of the year 555 alone , 1 @.@ 8 million men were mobilized to build the Juyong Pass and extend its wall by 450 kilometres (280 mi) through Datong to the eastern banks of the Yellow River . In 557 a secondary wall was built inside the main one . These walls were built quickly from local earth and stones or formed by natural barriers . Two stretches of the stone @-@ and @-@ earth Qi wall still stand in Shanxi today ,

measuring 3 @.@ 3 metres (11 ft) wide at their bases and 3 @.@ 5 metres (11 ft) high on average . In 577 the Northern Zhou conquered the Northern Qi and in 580 made repairs to the existing Qi walls . The route of the Qi and Zhou walls would be mostly followed by the later Ming wall west of Gubeikou , which includes reconstructed walls from Qi and Zhou . In more recent times , the reddish remnants of the Zhou ramparts in Hebei gave rise to the nickname " Red Wall " .

The Sui took power from the Northern Zhou in 581 before reuniting China in 589 . Sui 's founding emperor , Emperor Wen of Sui (r . 581 ? 604) , carried out considerable wall construction in 581 in Hebei and Shanxi to defend against Ishbara Qaghan of the Göktürks . The new walls proved insufficient in 582 when Ishbara Qaghan avoided them by riding west to raid Gansu and Shaanxi with 400 @, @ 000 archers . Between 585 and 588 Emperor Wen sought to close this gap by putting walls up in the Ordos Mountains (between Suide and Lingwu) and Inner Mongolia . In 586 as many as 150 @, @ 000 men are recorded as involved in the construction . Emperor Wen 's son Emperor Yang (r . 604 ? 618) continued to build walls . In 607 ? 8 he sent over a million men to build a wall from Yulin to near Huhhot to protect the newly refurbished eastern capital Luoyang . Part of the Sui wall survives to this day in Inner Mongolia as earthen ramparts some 2 @.@ 5 metres (8 ft 2 in) high with towers rising to double that . The dynastic history of Sui estimates that 500 @, @ 000 people died building the wall , adding to the number of casualties caused by Emperor Yang 's projects including the aforementioned redesign of Luoyang , the Grand Canal , and two ill @-@ fated campaigns against Goguryeo . With the economy strained and the populace resentful , the Sui dynasty erupted in rebellion and ended with the assassination of Emperor Yang in 618 .

= = Tang dynasty (618 ? 907) = =

Frontier policy under the Tang dynasty reversed the wall @-@ building activities of most previous dynasties that had occupied northern China since the third century BC , and no extensive wall building took place for the next several hundred years .

Soon after the establishment of the Tang dynasty , during the reign of Emperor Taizong (r . 626 ? 649) , the threat of Göktürk tribesmen from the north prompted some court officials to suggest drafting corvée labourers to repair the aging Great Wall . Taizong scoffed at the suggestion , alluding to the Sui walls built in vain : " The Emperor Yang of Sui made the people labor to construct the Great Wall in order to defend against the Turks , but in the end this was of no use . " Instead of building walls , Taizong claimed he " need merely to establish Li Shiji in Jinyang for the dust on the border to settle . " Accordingly , Taizong sent talented generals like Li Shiji with mobile armies to the frontier , while fortifications were mostly limited to a series of walled garrisons , such as the euphemistically @-@ named " cities for accepting surrender " (??? , shòuxiáng chéng) that were actually bases from which to launch attacks . As a result of this military strategy , the Tang grew to become one of the largest of all the Chinese empires , destroying the Göktürks of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate and acquiring territory stretching all the way to Kazakhstan .

Nevertheless , records show that in the Kaiyuan era (713 ? 742) of Emperor Xuanzong 's reign , the general Zhang Yue built a wall 90 li (48 kilometres (30 mi)) to the north of Huairong (?? ; present @-@ day Huailai County , Hebei) , although it remains unclear whether he erected new walls or only reinforced the existing Northern Qi walls .

The Great Wall , or the ruins of it , features prominently in the subset of Tang poetry known as biansai shi (??? , " frontier verse ") written by scholar @-@ officials assigned along the frontier . Emphasizing the poets ' loneliness and longing for home while hinting at the pointlessness of their posts , these frontier verses are characterized by imagery of desolate landscapes , including the ruins of the now @-@ neglected Great Wall ? a direct product of Tang 's frontier policy .

= = Song and the conquest dynasties (907 ? 1368) = =

= = = The northern walls of the Khitan , Jurchens , and Tanguts = = =

After the Tang dynasty ended in 907 , the northern frontier area remained out of Han Chinese hands until the establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368 . During this period , non @-@ Han " conquest dynasties " ruled the north : the Khitan Liao dynasty (907 ? 1125) and the succeeding Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115 ? 1234) in the east and the Tangut Western Xia (1038 ? 1227) in the west , all of which had built walls against the north .

In 907 , the Khitan chieftain Abaoji succeeded in getting himself appointed khaghan of all Khitan tribes in the north , laying the foundations to what would officially become the Liao dynasty . In 936 , the Khitan supported the Shanxi rebel Shi Jingtang in his revolt against the Shatuo Turkic Later Tang , which had destroyed the usurpers of the Tang in 923 . The Khitan leader , Abaoji 's second son Yelü Deguang , convinced Shi to found a new dynasty (the Later Jin , 936 ? 946) , and received the crucial border region known as the Sixteen Prefectures in return . With the Sixteen Prefectures , the Khitan now possessed all the passes and fortifications that controlled access to the plains of northern China , including the main Great Wall line .

Settling in the transitional area between agricultural lands and the steppe , the Khitans became semi @-@ sedentary like their Xianbei predecessors of the Northern Wei , and started to use Chinese methods of defence . In 1026 walls were built through central Manchuria north of Nong 'an County to the banks of the Songhua River . When the Jurchens , once Liao vassals , rose up to overthrow their masters and established the Jin dynasty , they continued Liao 's wall @-@ building activities with extensive work begun before 1138 . Further wall construction took place in 1165 and 1181 under the Jin Emperor Shizhong , and later from 1192 to 1203 during the reign of his successor Emperor Zhangzong .

This long period of wall @-@ building burdened the populace and provoked controversy . Sometime between 1190 and 1196 , during Zhangzong 's reign , the high official Zhang Wangong (???) and the Censorate recommended that work on the wall be indefinitely suspended due to a recent drought , noting : " What has been begun is already being flattened by sandstorms , and bullying the people into defence works will simply exhaust them . " However , Chancellor Wanyan Xiang (???) convinced the emperor of the walls ' merits based on an optimistic cost estimate ? " Although the initial outlay for the walls will be one million strings of cash , when the work is done the frontier will be secure with only half the present number of soldiers needed to defend it , which means that every year you will save three million strings of cash ... The benefits will be everlasting " ? and so construction continued unabated . All this work created an extensive systems of walls , which consisted of a 700 kilometres (430 mi) " outer wall " from Heilongjiang to Mongolia and a 1 @,@ 000 kilometres (620 mi) network of " inner walls " north and northeast of Beijing . Together , they formed a roughly elliptical web of fortifications 1 @,@ 400 kilometres (870 mi) in length and 440 kilometres (270 mi) in diameter . Some of these walls had inner moats (from 10 to 60 metres (33 to 197 ft) in width) , beacon towers , battlements , parapets , and outward @-@ facing semicircular platforms protruding from the wall ? features that set the Jin walls apart from their predecessors .

In the west , the Tanguts took control of the Ordos region , where they established the Western Xia dynasty . Although the Xia were not traditionally known for building walls , in 2011 archeologists uncovered 100 kilometres (62 mi) of walls at Ömnögovi Province in Mongolia in what had been Western Xia territory . Radiocarbon analysis showed that they were constructed from 1040 to 1160 . The walls were as tall as 2 @.@ 75 metres (9 ft 0 in) at places when they were discovered , and may have been around 2 metres (6 ft 7 in) taller originally . They were built with mud and saxaul (a desert shrub) in one section , and dark basalt blocks in another , suggesting that the rocks may have been quarried from nearby extinct volcanoes and transported to the construction site . Archaeologists have not yet found traces of human activity around this stretch of wall , which suggests that the Xia wall in this location may have been incomplete and not ready for use .

= = = The old Great Walls as Song boundary lines = = =

Han Chinese power during the tumultuous post @-@ Tang era was represented by the Song dynasty (960 ? 1279) , which completed its unification of the Chinese states with the conquest of

Wuyue in 971 . Turning to the north after this victory , in 979 the Song eliminated the Northern Han , ultimate successors to the Later Jin , but were unable to take the Sixteen Prefectures from the Liao dynasty . As a result of Song 's military aggression , relations between the Song and Liao remained tense and hostile . One of the battlegrounds in the Song ? Liao War was the Great Wall Gap (???) , so named because the southern Yan wall of the Warring States period crossed the Juma River here into Liao territory . The Great Wall Gap saw action in 979 , 988 ? 989 , and 1004 , and a Song fortress was built there in 980 . Intermittent wars between the Song and the Liao lasted until January 1005 , when a truce was called and led to the Treaty of Chanyuan . This agreement , among other things , required the Song to pay tribute to the Liao , recognized the Song and Liao as equals , and demarcated the Song ? Liao border , the course of which became more clearly defined in a series of subsequent bilateral agreements . Several stretches of the old Great Walls , including the Northern Qi Inner Wall near the Hengshan mountain range , became the border between the Song and the Liao .

In the northwest , the Song were in conflict with the Western Xia , since they occupied what the Song considered as Chinese land lost during the Tang dynasty . The Song utilized the walls built during the reign of Qin 's King Zhaoxiang of the Warring States period , making it the Song ? Western Xia border , but the topography of the area was not as sharp and distinct as the Song ? Liao defences to the east . The border general Cao Wei (?? ; 973 ? 1030) deemed the Old Wall itself insufficient to slow a Tangut cavalry attack , and had a deep trench dug alongside . This trench , between 15 and 20 metres (49 and 66 ft) in width and depth , proved an effective defence , but in 1002 the Tanguts caught the Song patrollers off guard and filled the trench to cross the Old Wall . Later , in 1042 , the Tanguts turned the trench against the Song by removing the bridges over it , thereby trapping the retreating army of Ge Huaimin (???) before annihilating it at the Battle of Dingchuan Fortress (???) .

Despite the war with the Western Xia , the Song also settled land disputes with them by referring to prior agreements , as with the Liao . However , soon after the Jin dynasty overthrew the Liao dynasty , the Jurchens sacked the Song capital in 1127 during the Jin ? Song wars , causing the Song court to flee south of the Yangtze River . For the next two and a half centuries , the Great Wall played no role in Han Chinese geopolitics .

= = = The onset of the Mongols = = =

In the 13th century , the Mongol leader Genghis Khan , once a vassal of the Jurchens , rose up against the Jin dynasty . In the ensuing Mongol conquest of the Jin dynasty , the nomadic invaders avoided direct attacks on the Jin fortifications . Instead , when they could , the Mongols simply rode around the walls ; an effective example of this tactic is in 1211 , when they circumvented the substantial fortress in Zhangjiakou and inflicted a terrible defeat upon the Jin armies at the Battle of Yehuling . The Mongols also took advantage of lingering Liao resentment against the Jin ; the Khitan defenders of the garrisons along the Jin walls , such as those in Gubeikou , often preferred to surrender to the Mongols rather than fight them . The only major engagement of note along the main Great Wall line was at the heavily defended Juyong Pass : instead of laying siege , the Mongol general Jebe lured the defenders out into an ambush and charged in through the opened gates . In 1215 , Genghis Khan besieged , captured , and sacked the Jin capital of Yanjing (modern @-@ day Beijing) . The Jin dynasty eventually collapsed following the siege of Caizhou in 1234 . Western Xia had already fallen in 1227 , and the Southern Song resisted the Mongols until 1279 .

With that , the Yuan dynasty , established by Genghis Khan 's grandson Khublai Khan , became the first foreign dynasty to rule all of China . Despite being the head of the Mongol Empire , Khublai Khan 's rule over China was not free from the threat of the steppe nomads . The Yuan dynasty faced challenges from rival claimants to the title of Great Khan and from rebellious Mongols in the north . Khublai Khan dealt with such threats by using both military blockades and economic sanctions . Although he established garrisons along the steppe frontier from the Juyan Lake Basin in the far west to Yingchang in the east , Khublai Khan and the Yuan emperors after him did not add to the Great Wall (except for the ornate Cloud Platform at Juyong Pass) . When the Venetian traveller

Marco Polo wrote of his experiences in China during the reign of Khublai Khan , he did not mention a Great Wall .

= = Ming dynasty (1368 ? 1644) = =

= = = The early walls = = =

In 1368 , the Hongwu Emperor (Zhu Yuanzhang , r . 1368 ? 98) ousted the Mongol @-@ led Yuan dynasty from China to inaugurate the Ming dynasty . The Mongols fled back to Mongolia , but even after numerous campaigns , the Mongol problem remained .

During his early reign , Hongwu set up the " eight outer garrisons " close to the steppe and an inner line of forts more suitable for defence . The inner line was the forerunner to the Ming Great Wall . In 1373 , as Ming forces encountered setbacks , Hongwu put more emphasis on defence and adopted Hua Yunlong 's (???) suggestion to establish garrisons at 130 passes and other strategic points in the Beijing area . More positions were set up in the years up Hongwu 's death in 1398 , and watchtowers were manned from the Bohai Sea to Beijing and further onto the Mongolian steppes . These positions , however , were not for a linear defence but rather a regional one in which walls did not feature heavily , and offensive tactics remained the overarching policy at the time . In 1421 , the Ming capital was relocated from Nanjing in the south to Beijing in the north , partly to better manage the Mongol situation . Thus defenses were concentrated around Beijing , where stone and earth began to replace rammed earth in strategic passes . A wall was erected by the Ming in Liaodong to protect Han settlers from a possible threat from the Jurchen @-@ Mongol Oriyangan around 1442 . In 1467 ? 68 , expansion of the wall provided further protection for the region from against attacks by the Jianzhou Jurchens in the northeast .

Meanwhile , the outer defenses were gradually moved inward , thereby sacrificing a vital foothold in the steppe transitional zone . Despite the withdrawal from the steppe , the Ming military remained in a strong position against the nomads until the Tumu Crisis in 1449 , which caused the collapse of the early Ming security system . Over half of the campaigning Chinese army perished in the conflict , while the Mongols captured the Zhengtong Emperor . This military debacle shattered the Chinese military might that had so impressed and given pause to the Mongols since the beginning of the dynasty , and caused the Ming to be on the defensive ever since .

The deterioration of the Ming military position in the steppe transitional zone gave rise to nomadic raids into Ming territory , including the crucial Ordos region , on a level unprecedented since the dynasty 's founding . After decades of deliberation between an offensive strategy and an accommodative policy , the decision to build the first major Ming walls in the Ordos was agreed upon as an acceptable compromise the 1470s .

Yu Zijun (??? ; 1429 ? 1489) first proposed constructing a wall in the Ordos region in August 1471 , but not until 20 December 1472 did the court and emperor approve the plan . The 1473 victory in the Battle of Red Salt Lake (???) by Wang Yue (??) deterred Mongol invasions long enough for Yu Zijun to complete his wall project in 1474 . This wall , a combined effort between Yu Zijun and Wang Yue , stretched from present day Hengcheng (??) in Lingwu (northwestern Ningxia province) to Huamachi town (????) in Yanchi County , and from there to Qingshuiying (???) in northeastern Shaanxi , a total of more than 2000 li (about 1 @,@ 100 kilometres (680 mi)) long . Along its length were 800 strong points , sentry posts , beacon @-@ fire towers , and assorted defences . 40 @,@ 000 men were enlisted for this effort , which was completed in several months at a cost of over one million silver taels . This defence system proved its initial worth in 1482 , when a large group of Mongol raiders were trapped within the double lines of fortifications and suffered a defeat by the Ming generals . This was seen as a vindication of Yu Zijun 's strategy of wall @-@ building by the people of the border areas . By the mid @-@ 16th century , Yu 's wall in the Ordos had seen expansion into an extensive defence system . It contained two defence lines : Yu 's wall , called the " great border " (?? , dàbì?n) , and a " secondary border " (?? , èrbì?n) built by Yang Yiqing (??? ; 1454 ? 1530) behind it .

Following the success of the Ordos walls , Yu Zijun proposed construction of a further wall that would extend from the Yellow River bend in the Ordos to the Sihaiye Pass (山海卫 ; in present @-@ day Yanqing County) near the capital Beijing , running a distance of more than 1300 li (about 700 kilometres (430 mi)) . The project received approval in 1485 , but Yu 's political enemies harped on the cost overruns and forced Yu to scrap the project and retire the same year . For more than 50 years after Yu 's resignation , political struggle prevented major wall constructions on a scale comparable to Yu 's Ordos project .

However , wall construction continued regardless of court politics during this time . The Ordos walls underwent extension , elaboration , and repair well into the 16th century . Brick and stone started to replace tamped earth as the wall building material , because they offered better protection and durability . This change in material gave rise to a number of necessary accommodations with regard to logistics , and inevitably a drastic increase in costs . Instead of being able to draw on local resources , building projects now required brick @-@ kilns , quarries , and transportation routes to deliver bricks to the work site . Also , masons had to be hired since the local peasantry proved inadequate for the level of sophistication that brick constructions required . Work that originally could be done by one man in a month with earth now required 100 men to do in stone .

= = = The Walls of Xuanfu ? Datong and the western reaches = = =

With the Ordos now adequately fortified , the Mongols avoided its walls by riding east to invade Datong and Xuanfu (宣府 ; present @-@ day Xuanhua , Hebei Province) , which were two major garrisons guarding the corridor to Beijing where no walls had been built . The two defence lines of Xuanfu and Datong left by the Northern Qi and the early Ming had deteriorated by this point , and for all intents and purposes the inner line was the capital 's main line of defence .

From 1544 to 1549 , Weng Wanda (翁万达 ; 1498 ? 1552) embarked on a defensive building program on a scale unprecedented in Chinese history . Troops were re @-@ deployed along the outer line , new walls and beacon towers were constructed , and fortifications were restored and extended along both lines . Firearms and artillery were mounted on the walls and towers during this time , for both defence and signalling purposes . The project 's completion was announced in the sixth month of 1548 . At its height , the Xuan ? Da portion of the Great Wall totalled about 850 kilometres (530 mi) of wall , with some sections being doubled @-@ up with two lines of wall , some tripled or even quadrupled . The outer frontier was now protected by a wall called the " outer border " (外边 , wàibi?n) that extended 380 kilometres (240 mi) from the Yellow River 's edge at the Piantou Pass (偏头关) along the Inner Mongolia border with Shanxi into Hebei province ; the " inner border " wall (内边 , nèibi?n) ran southeast from Piantou Pass for some 400 kilometres (250 mi) , ending at the Pingxing Pass ; a " river wall " (河边 , hébi?n) also ran from the Piantou Pass and followed the Yellow River southwards for about 70 kilometres (43 mi) .

As with Yu Zijun 's wall in the Ordos , the Mongols shifted their attacks away from the newly strengthened Xuan ? Da sector to less well @-@ protected areas . In the west , Shaanxi province became the target of nomads riding west from the Yellow River loop . The westernmost fortress of Ming China , the Jiayu Pass , saw substantial enhancement with walls starting in 1539 , and from there border walls were built discontinuously down the Hexi Corridor to Wuwei , where the low earthen wall split into two . The northern section passed through Zhongwei and Yinchuan , where it met the western edge of the Yellow River loop before connecting with the Ordos walls , while the southern section passed through Lanzhou and continued northeast to Dingbian . The origins and the exact route of this so @-@ called " Tibetan loop " are still not clear .

= = = From Beijing to Shanhai Pass = = =

In 1550 , having once more been refused a request for trade , the Tümed Mongols under Altan Khan invaded the Xuan ? Da region . However , despite several attempts , he could not take Xuanfu due to Weng Wanda 's double fortified line while the garrison at Datong bribed him to not attack there . Instead of continuing to operate in the area , he circled around Weng Wanda 's wall to the

relatively lightly defended Gubeikou , northeast of Beijing . From there Altan Khan passed through the defences and raided the suburbs of Beijing . According to one contemporary source , the raid took more than 60 000 lives and an additional 40 000 people became prisoners . As a response to this raid , the focus of the Ming 's northern defences shifted from the Xuan ? Da region to the Jizhou (???) and Changping Defence Commands (???) where the breach took place . Later in the same year , the dry @-@ stone walls of the Jizhou ? Changping area (abbreviated as " Ji @-@ Chang ") were replaced by stone and mortar . These allowed the Chinese to build on steeper , more easily defended slopes and facilitated construction of features such as ramparts , crenelations , and peepholes . The effectiveness of the new walls was demonstrated in the failed Mongol raid of 1554 , where raiders expecting a repeat of the events of 1550 were surprised by the higher wall and stiff Chinese resistance .

In 1567 Qi Jiguang and Tan Lun , successful generals who fended off the coastal pirates , were reassigned to manage the Ji ? Chang Defense Commands and step up the defences of the capital region . Under their ambitious and energetic management , 1200 brick watchtowers were built along the Great Wall from 1569 to 1571 . These included the first large @-@ scale use of hollow watchtowers on the Wall : up until this point , most previous towers along the Great Wall had been solid , with a small hut on top for a sentry to take shelter from the elements and Mongol arrows ; the Ji ? Chang towers built from 1569 onwards were hollow brick structures , allowing soldiers interior space to live , store food and water , stockpile weapons , and take shelter from Mongol arrows .

Altan Khan eventually made peace with China when it opened border cities for trade in 1571 , alleviating the Mongol need to raid . This , coupled with Qi and Tan 's efforts to secure the frontier , brought a period of relative peace along the border . However , minor raids still happened from time to time when the profits of plunder outweighed those of trade , prompting the Ming to close all gaps along the frontier around Beijing . Areas of difficult terrain once considered impassable were also walled off , leading to the well @-@ known vistas of a stone @-@ faced Great Wall snaking over dramatic landscapes that tourists still see today .

Wall construction continued until the demise of the Ming dynasty in 1644 . In the decades that led to the fall of the Ming dynasty , the Ming court and the Great Wall itself had to deal with simultaneous internal rebellions and the Manchu invasions . In addition to their conquest of Liaodong , the Manchus had raided across the Great Wall for the first time in 1629 , and again in 1634 , 1638 , and 1642 . Meanwhile , the rebels led by warlord Li Zicheng had been gathering strength . In the early months of 1644 , Li Zicheng declared himself the founder of the Shun and marched towards the Ming capital from Shaanxi . His route roughly followed the line of the Great Wall , in order to neutralize its heavily fortified garrisons . The crucial defences of Datong , Xuanfu , and Juyong Pass all surrendered without a fight , and the Chongzhen Emperor hanged himself on 25 April as the Shun army entered Beijing . At this point , the largest remaining Ming fighting force in North China was in Shanhai Pass , where the Great Wall meets the Bohai Sea . Its defender Wu Sangui , wedged between the Shun army within and the Manchus without , decided to surrender to the Manchus and opened the gates for them . The Manchus , having thus entered through the Great Wall , defeated Li Zicheng at the Battle of Shanhai Pass and seized Beijing on June 5 . They eventually defeated both the rebel @-@ founded Shun dynasty and the remaining Ming resistance , establishing their rule over all of China as the Qing dynasty .

Opinions about the Wall 's role in the Ming dynasty 's downfall are mixed . Historians such as Arthur Waldron and Julia Lovell are critical of the whole wall @-@ building exercise in light of its ultimate failure in protecting China ; the former compared the Great Wall with the failed Maginot Line of the French in World War II . However , independent scholar David Spindler notes that the Wall , being only part of a complex foreign policy , received " disproportionate blame " because it was the most obvious relic of that policy .

= = Qing dynasty (1644 ? 1911) = =

The usefulness of the Great Wall as a defence line against northern nomads became questionable under the Qing dynasty , since their territory encompassed vast areas inside and outside the wall :

China proper , Manchuria , and Mongolia were all under Qing control . So instead , the Great Wall became the means to limit Han Chinese movement into the steppes . In the case of Manchuria , considered to be the sacred homeland by the ruling Manchu elites , some parts of the Ming Liaodong Wall were repaired so it could serve to control Han Chinese movement into Manchuria alongside the newly erected Willow Palisade .

Culturally , the wall 's symbolic role as a line between civilized society and barbarism was suppressed by the Qing , who were keen to weaken the Han culturalism that had been propagated by the Ming . As a result , no special attention was paid to the Great Wall until the mid @-@ Qing dynasty , when Westerners started to show interest in the structure .

= = = Western appreciation of the Wall = = =

The existence of a colossal wall in Asia had circulated in the Middle East and the West even before the first Europeans arrived in China by sea . The late antiquity historian Ammianus Marcellinus (330 ? ? 395 ?) mentioned " summits of lofty walls " enclosing the land of Seres , the country that the Romans believed to be at the eastern end of the Silk Road . In legend , the tribes of Gog and Magog were said to have been locked out by Alexander the Great with walls of steel . Later Arab writers and travellers , such as Rashid @-@ al @-@ Din Hamadani (1248 ? 1318) and Ibn Battuta (1304 ? 377) , would erroneously identify the Great Wall in China with the walls of the Alexander romances . This indicated that Arabs may have heard about China 's Great Wall during earlier periods of China 's history , and associated it with the wall in the Gog and Magog legend , a tale that found its way into the Quran .

Soon after Europeans reached Ming China in the early 16th century , accounts of the Great Wall started to circulate in Europe , even though no European would see it with their own eyes for another century . The work *A Treatise of China and the Adjoyning Regions* by Gaspar da Cruz (c . 1520 ? 70) offered an early discussion of the Great Wall in which he noted , " a Wall of an hundred leagues in length . And some will affirme to bee more than a hundred leagues . " Another early account written by Bishop Juan González de Mendoza (1550 ? 1620) reported a wall five hundred leagues long , but suggested that only one hundred leagues were man @-@ made , with the rest natural rock formations . The Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552 ? 1610) mentioned the Great Wall once in his diary , noting the existence of " a tremendous wall four hundred and five miles long " that formed part of the northern defences of the Ming Empire .

Europeans first witnessed the Great Wall in the early 1600s . Perhaps the first recorded instance of a European actually entering China via the Great Wall came in 1605 , when the Portuguese Jesuit brother Bento de Góis reached the northwestern Jiayu Pass from India . Ivan Petlin 's 1619 deposition for his Russian embassy mission offers an early account based on a first @-@ hand encounter with the Great Wall , and mentions that in the course of the journey his embassy travelled alongside the Great Wall for ten days .

Early European accounts were mostly modest and empirical , closely mirroring contemporary Chinese understanding of the Wall . However , when the Ming Great Wall began to take on a shape still recognizable today , foreign accounts of the Wall slid into hyperbole . In the *Atlas Sinensis* published in 1665 , the Jesuit Martino Martini described elaborate but atypical stretches of the Great Wall and generalized such fortifications across the whole northern frontier . Furthermore , Martini erroneously identified the Ming Wall as the same wall built by Qin Shi Huang in the 3rd century BC , thereby exaggerating both the Wall 's antiquity and its size . This misconception was compounded by the *China Illustrata* of Father Athanasius Kircher (1602 ? 80) , which provided pictures of the Great Wall as imagined by a European illustrator . All these and other accounts from missionaries in China contributed to the Orientalism of the eighteenth century , in which a mythical China and its exaggerated Great Wall feature prominently . The French philosopher Voltaire (1694 ? 1774) , for example , frequently wrote about the Great Wall , although his feelings towards it oscillate between unreserved admiration and condemnation of it as a " monument to fear " . The Macartney Embassy of 1793 passed through the Great Wall at Gubeikou on the way to see the Qianlong Emperor in Chengde , who was there for the annual imperial hunt . One of the embassy 's members , John

Barrow , later founder of the Royal Geographical Society , spuriously calculated that the amount of stone in the Wall was equivalent to " all the dwelling houses of England and Scotland " and would suffice to encircle the Earth at the equator twice . The illustrations of the Great Wall by Lieutenant Henry William Parish during this mission would be reproduced in influential works such as Thomas Allom 's 1845 China , in a series of views .

Exposure to such works brought many foreign visitors to the Great Wall after China opened its borders as a result of the nation 's defeat in the Opium Wars of the mid @-@ 19th century at the hands of Britain and the other Western powers . The Juyong Pass near Beijing and the " Old Dragon Head , " where the Great Wall meets the sea at the Shanhai Pass , proved popular destinations for these wall watchers .

The travelogues of the later 19th century in turn further contributed to the elaboration and propagation of the Great Wall myth . Examples of this myth 's growth are the false but widespread belief that the Great Wall of China is visible from the Moon or Mars .

= = Modern China (1911 ? present) = =

The Xinhai Revolution in 1911 forced the abdication of the last Qing Emperor Puyi and ended China 's last imperial dynasty . The revolutionaries , headed by Sun Yat @-@ sen , were concerned with creating a modern sense of national identity in the chaotic post @-@ imperial era . In contrast to Chinese academics such as Liang Qichao , who tried to counter the West 's fantastic version of the Great Wall , Sun Yat @-@ sen held the view that Qin Shi Huang 's wall preserved the Chinese race , and without it Chinese culture would not have developed enough to expand to the south and assimilate foreign conquerors . Such an endorsement from the " Father of Modern China " started to transform the Great Wall into a national symbol in the Chinese consciousness , though this transformation was hampered by conflicting views of nationalism with regard to the nascent " new China . "

The failure of the new Republic of China fanned disillusionment with traditional Chinese culture and ushered in the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement of the mid @-@ 1910s and 1920s that aimed to dislodge China 's future trajectory from its past . Naturally , the Great Wall of China came under attack as a symbol of the past . For example , an influential writer of this period , Lu Xun , harshly criticized the " mighty and accursed Great Wall " in a short essay : " In reality , it has never served any purpose than to make countless workers labour to death in vain ... [It] surrounds everyone . "

Sino @-@ Japanese conflict (1931 ? 45) gave the Great Wall a new lease of life in the eyes of the Chinese . During the 1933 defence of the Great Wall , inadequately @-@ equipped Chinese soldiers held off double their number of Japanese troops for several months . Using the cover of the Great Wall , the Chinese ? who were at times only armed with broadswords ? were able to beat off a Japanese advance that had the support of aerial bombardment . With the Chinese forces eventually overrun , the subsequent Tanggu Truce stipulated that the Great Wall was to become a demilitarized zone separating China and the newly created Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo . Even so , the determined defence of the Great Wall made it a symbol of Chinese patriotism and the resoluteness of the Chinese people . The Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong picked up this symbol in his poetry during his " Long March " escaping from Kuomintang prosecution . Near the end of the trek in 1935 , Mao wrote the poem " Mount Liupan " that contains the well @-@ known line that would be carved in stone along the Great Wall in the present day : " Those who fail to reach the Great Wall are not true men " (???????) . Another noteworthy reference to the Great Wall is in the song " The March of the Volunteers " , whose words came from a stanza in Tian Han 's 1934 poem entitled " The Great Wall " . The song , originally from the anti @-@ Japanese movie Children of Troubled Times , enjoyed continued popularity in China and was selected as the provisional national anthem of the People 's Republic of China (PRC) at its establishment in 1949 .

In 1952 , the scholar @-@ turned @-@ bureaucrat Guo Moruo laid out the first modern proposal to repair the Great Wall . Five years later , the renovated Badaling became the first section to be opened to the public since the establishment of the PRC . The Badaling Great Wall has since

become a staple stop for foreign dignitaries who come to China , beginning with Nepali prime minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala in 1960 , and most notably the American president Richard Nixon in his historic 1972 visit to China . To date , Badaling is still the most visited stretch of the Great Wall .

Other stretches did not fare so well . During the Cultural Revolution (1966 ? 76) , hundreds of kilometres of the Great Wall ? already damaged in the wars of the last century and eroded by wind and rain ? were deliberately destroyed by fervent Red Guards who regarded it as part of the " Four Olds " to be eradicated in the new China . Quarrying machines and even dynamite were used to dismantle the Wall , and the pilfered materials were used for construction .

As China opened up in the 1980s , reformist leader Deng Xiaoping initiated the " Love our China and restore our Great Wall " campaign (???? ? ???) to repair and preserve the Great Wall . The Great Wall was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 . However , while tourism boomed over the years , slipshod restoration methods have left sections of the Great Wall near Beijing " looking like a Hollywood set " in the words of the National Geographic News . The less prominent stretches of the Great Wall did not get as much attention . In 2002 the New York @-@ based World Monuments Fund put the Great Wall on its list of the World 's 100 Most Endangered Sites . In 2003 the Chinese government began to enact laws to protect the Great Wall .

= = Historiography = =

In China , one of the first individuals to attempt a multi @-@ dynastic history of the Great Wall was the 17th @-@ century scholar Gu Yanwu . More recently , in the 1930s and 1940s , Wang Guoliang (???) and Shou Pengfei (???) produced exhaustive studies that culled extant literary records to date and mapped the courses of early border walls . However , these efforts were based solely on written records that contain obscure place names and elusive literary references .

The rise of modern archeology has contributed much to the study of the Great Wall , either in corroborating existing research or in refuting it . However these efforts do not yet give a full picture of the Great Wall 's history , as many wall sites dating to the Period of Disunity (220 ? 589) had been overlaid by the extant Ming Great Wall .

Western scholarship of the Great Wall was , until recently , affected by misconceptions derived from traditional accounts of the Wall . When the Jesuits brought back the first reports of the Wall to the West , European scholars were puzzled that Marco Polo had not mentioned the presumably perennial " Great Wall " in his Travels . Some 17th @-@ century scholars reasoned that the Wall must have been built in the Ming dynasty , after Marco Polo 's departure . This view was soon replaced by another that argued , against Polo 's own account , that the Venetian merchant had come to China from the south and so did not come into contact with the Wall . Thus , Father Martino Martini 's mistaken claim that the Wall had " lasted right up to the present time without injury or destruction " since the time of Qin was accepted as fact by the 18th @-@ century philosophes .

Since then , many scholars have operated under the belief that the Great Wall continually defended China 's border against the steppe nomads for two thousand years . For example , the 18th @-@ century sinologist Joseph de Guignes assigned macrohistorical importance to such walls when he advanced the theory that the Qin construction forced the Xiongnu to migrate west to Europe and , becoming known as the Huns , ultimately contributed to the decline of the Roman Empire . Some have attempted to make general statements regarding Chinese society and foreign policy based on the conception of a perennial Great Wall : Karl Marx took the Wall to represent the stagnation of the Chinese society and economy , Owen Lattimore supposed that the Great Wall demonstrated a need to divide the nomadic way of life from the agricultural communities of China , and John K. Fairbank posited that the Wall played a part in upholding the Sinocentric world order .

Despite the significance that the Great Wall seemed to have , scholarly treatment of the Wall itself remained scant during the 20th century . Joseph Needham bemoaned this dearth when he was compiling the section on walls for his Science and Civilisation in China : " There is no lack of travelers ' description of the Great Wall , but studies based on modern scholarship are few and far between , whether in Chinese or Western languages . " In 1990 , Arthur Waldron published the

influential *The Great Wall : From History to Myth* , where he challenged the notion of a unitary Great Wall maintained since antiquity , dismissing it as a modern myth . Waldron 's approach prompted a re @-@ examination of the Wall in Western scholarship . Still , as of 2008 , there is not yet a full authoritative text in any language that is devoted to the Great Wall . The reason for this , according to *The New Yorker* journalist Peter Hessler , is that the Great Wall fits into neither the study of political institutions (favoured by Chinese historians) nor the excavation of tombs (favoured by Chinese archeologists) . Some of the void left by academia is being filled by independent research from Great Wall enthusiasts such as ex @-@ Xinhua reporter Cheng Dalin (???) and self @-@ funded scholar David Spindler .