

# Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History

. . . to the Beginning of the Common Era

# Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History

## Lecture Topics

- Lecture One: The Structure of the Chinese Past
- Lecture Two: Early Confucianism: Human Nature Perfected
- Lecture Three: "A Weak People Means a Strong State": A Chinese *Realpolitik*
- Lecture Four: The Mysterious Female: Immanence and Transcendence in the Daoist Tradition
- Lecture Five: The Formation of the Confucian State

## Course Materials

Although of course there are no “assigned readings” for these lectures, your understanding will probably be enhanced by reading excerpts from the texts we will be discussing. If you wish to do so, you can download them by clicking on the following link:

<https://github.com/mcummingsny/Chinese-Intellectual-History>

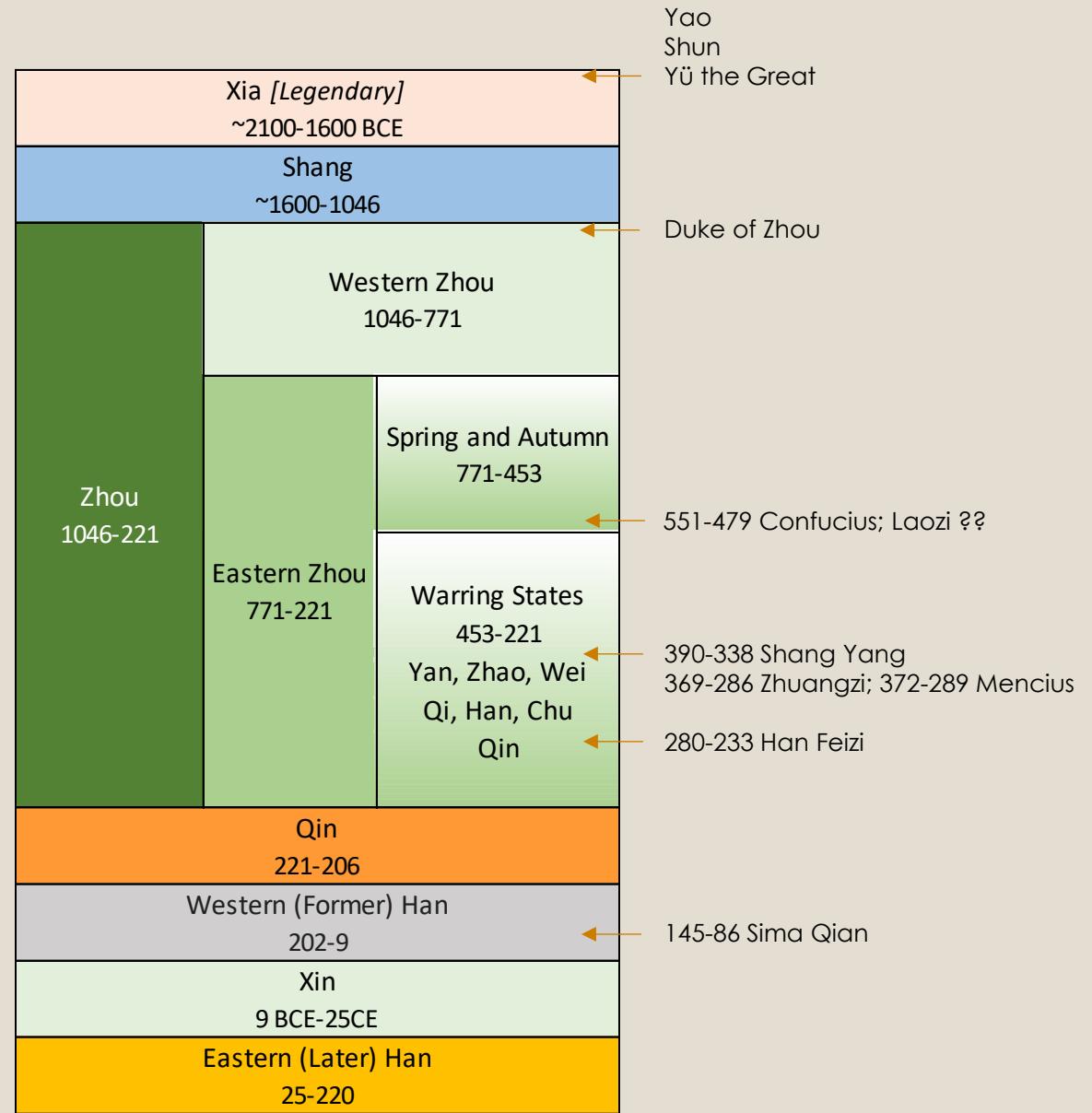
# Lecture One

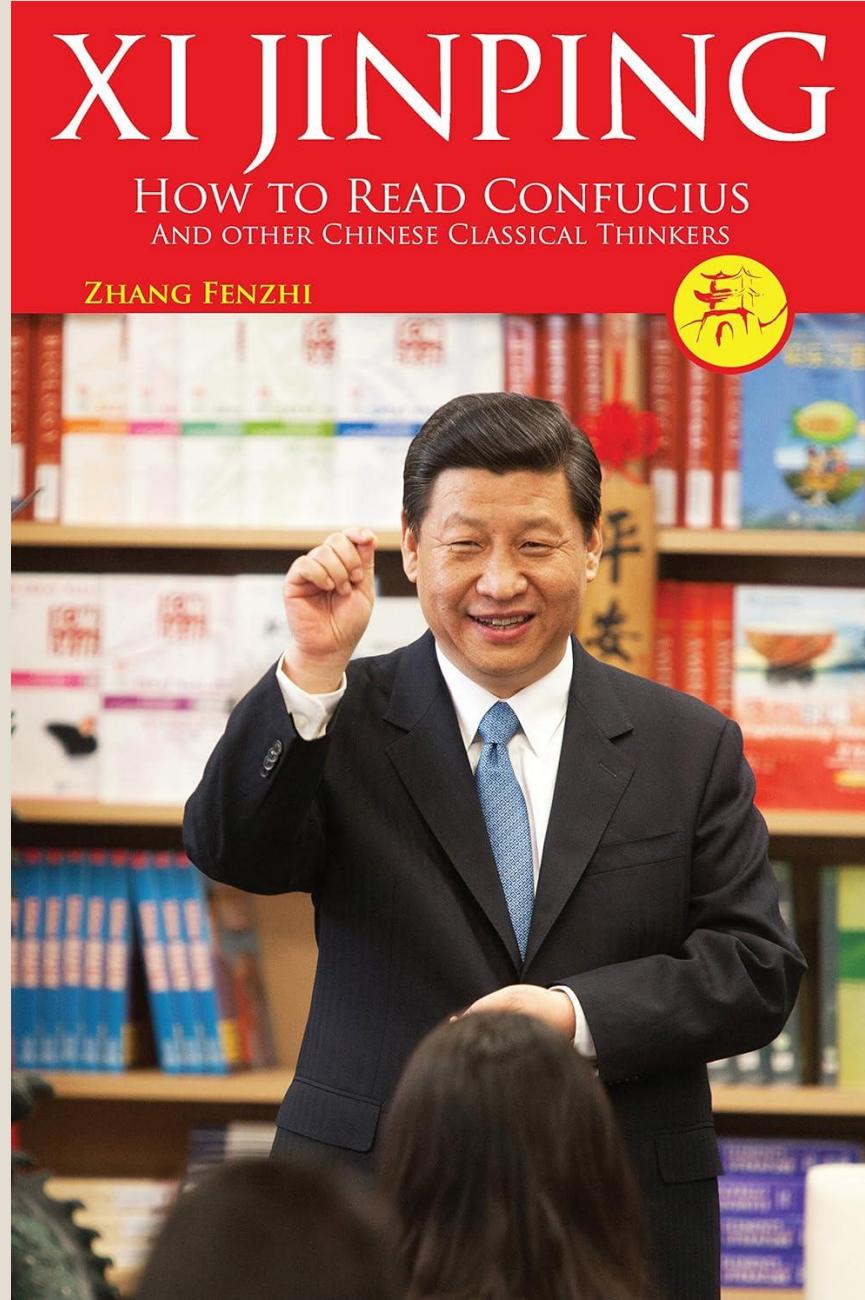
# The Pattern of the Chinese Past

# Dynastic Chronology

To 220 CE

Course materials are available at:  
[https://github.com/mcummingssny/Chinese-  
Intellectual-History](https://github.com/mcummingssny/Chinese-Intellectual-History)





"In the past two years, Xi Jinping, in significant domestic and international speeches, has often quoted Chinese classics or the proverbs of other countries to reinforce his important points and demonstrate his disciplined pursuit of wisdom. These quotations contain profound philosophy and radiate the ray of intelligence."

"This new collection, *Xi Jinping: How to Read Confucius and Other Chinese Classical Thinkers*, lists over 200 classical quotations and reflects the achievements of Xi Jinping's extensive reading and diligent studies."

## The “Economy of Words” in Classical Chinese

Classical Chinese

(30)

莊子釣於濮水，楚王使大夫二人往先焉，曰：“願以竟內累矣。”莊子持竿不顧，曰：

Modern Chinese  
(vernacular)

(70)

莊子在濮水邊釣魚，楚王派遣兩位大夫到濮水那兒去先去見莊子說明他的願望，兩位大夫說：“楚王希望請您到楚國來做宰相，管理全國的政事。”莊子拿著釣魚竿不回頭看，說：

English Translation

(73)

Zhuāngzǐ was fishing by the Pú River. The king of Chǔ sent two high officials to go there first to see Zhuāngzǐ and to make the king's wishes known. The two high officials said: "The king of Chǔ has now expressed a desire to invite you to Chǔ as prime minister to supervise the administration of the whole kingdom." Zhuāngzǐ, holding his fishing pole and not turning round to look at them, said:

# Contemporary China

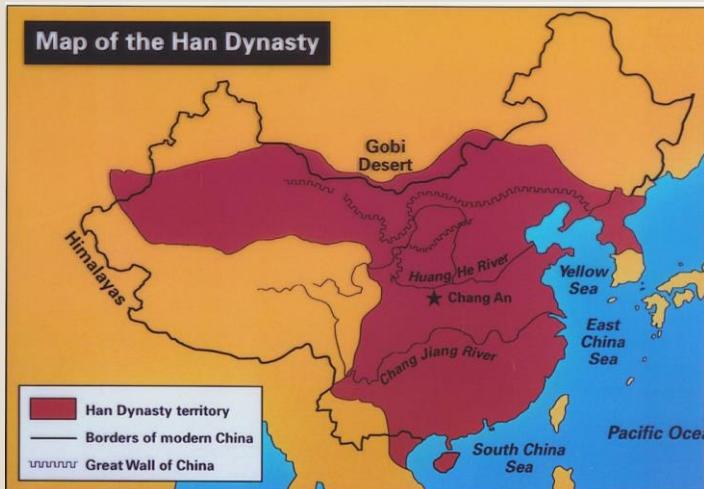


Area: 9,596,961 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 1,409,670,000 (est.)

# Three Great Chinese Empires

Han: 202 BCE – 220 CE



Tang: 618 – 907



Song: 960 – 1279



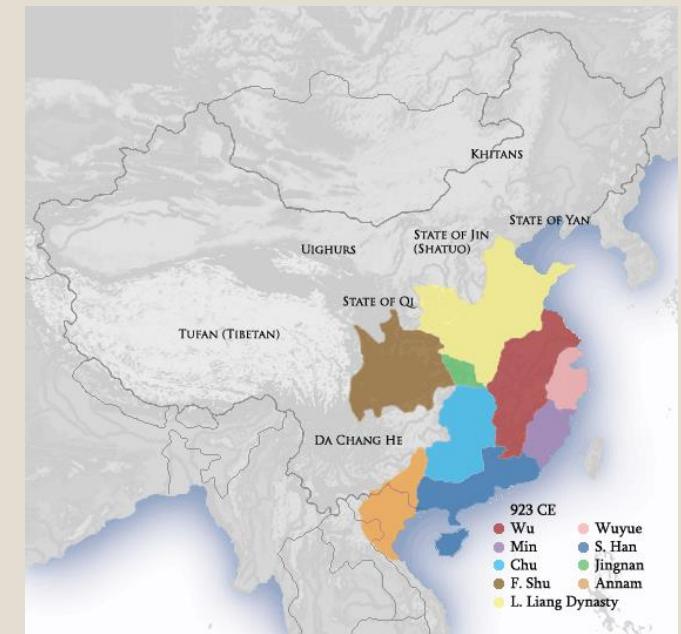
# Periods of Disunion



China ca. 500 BCE  
“Spring and Autumn Period”



China ca. 250 CE  
“Three Kingdoms”



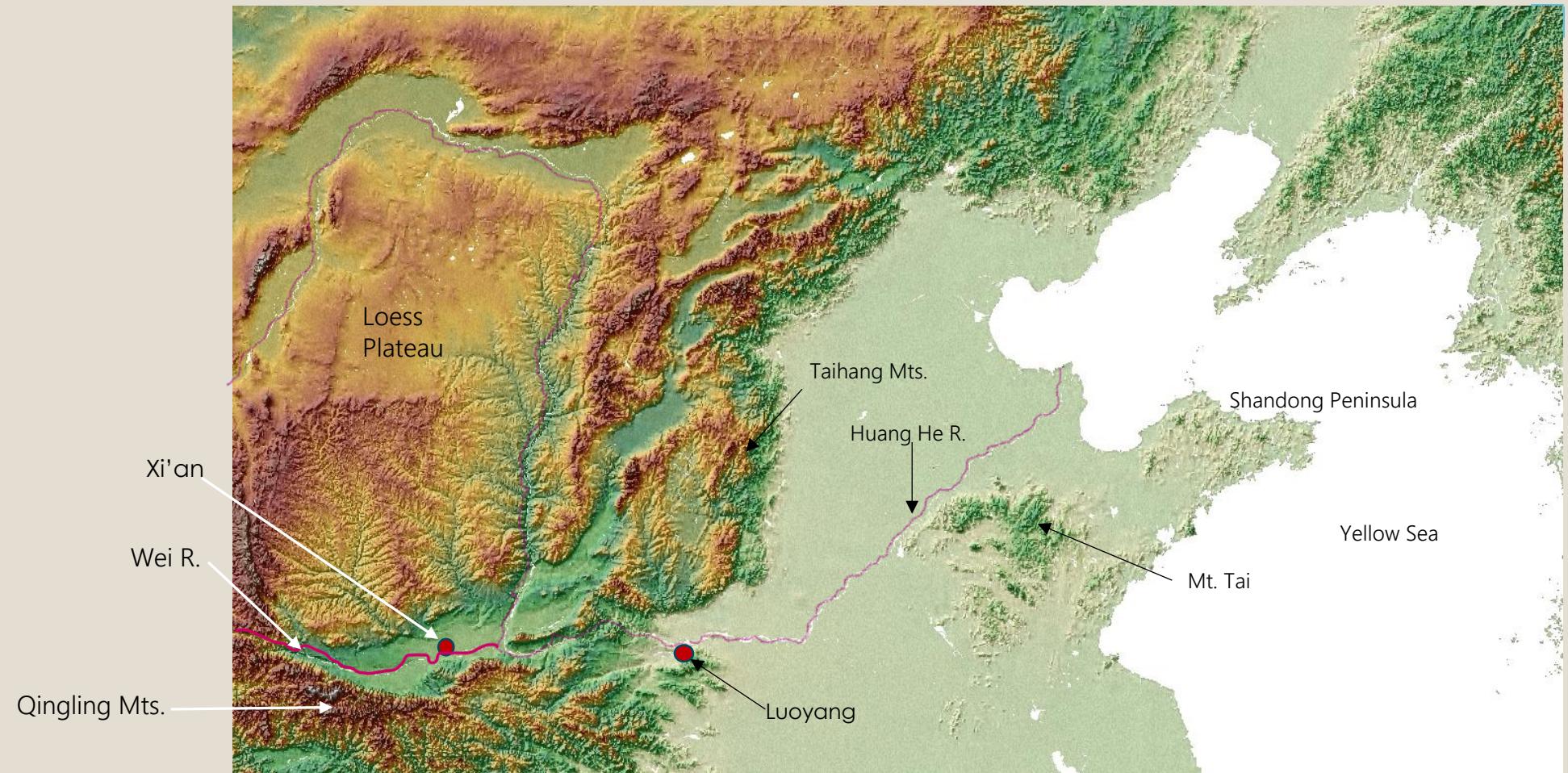
China ca. 920 CE  
“Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms”



China ca. 471CE  
“Northern and Southern Dynasties”

# The North China Plain

“Cradle” of Chinese Civilization



## Some Erlitou and Erligang Sites c. 1100 BCE

Erlitou  
Zhengzhou, principal Erligang site



By Ismoon (talk) 18:54, 16 July 2014 (UTC), based on the map in *Art and Archaeology of the Erligang Civilization*, Princeton University Press, 2014

Erlitou-era ritual  
wine vessel (*Jue*)  
c.1600 BCE



# China during the Shang Period c. 1100 BCE





## Some Shang-era Ritual Bronze Vessels

*Li* Food Warmer, 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE



Gong wine  
vessel, 13<sup>th</sup>  
century  
BCE

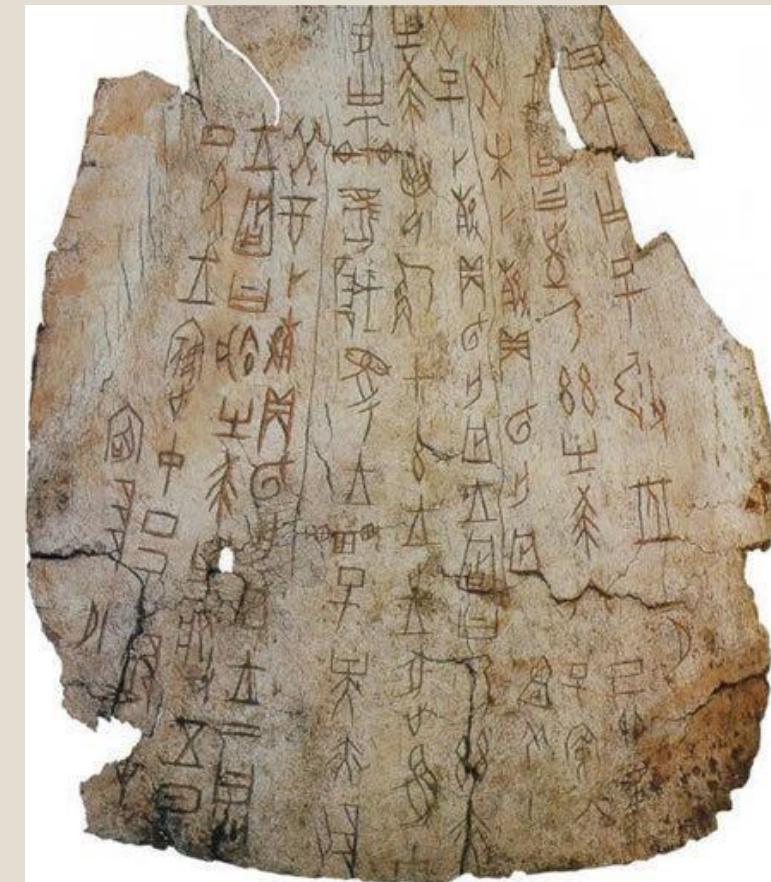


Gu goblet, 1200-1050 BCE



Ding tripod, 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE

# Shang-era Oracle-bone Inscriptions



# China during the Shang Period c. 1100 BCE

The Zhou Peoples  
A peripheral tribe



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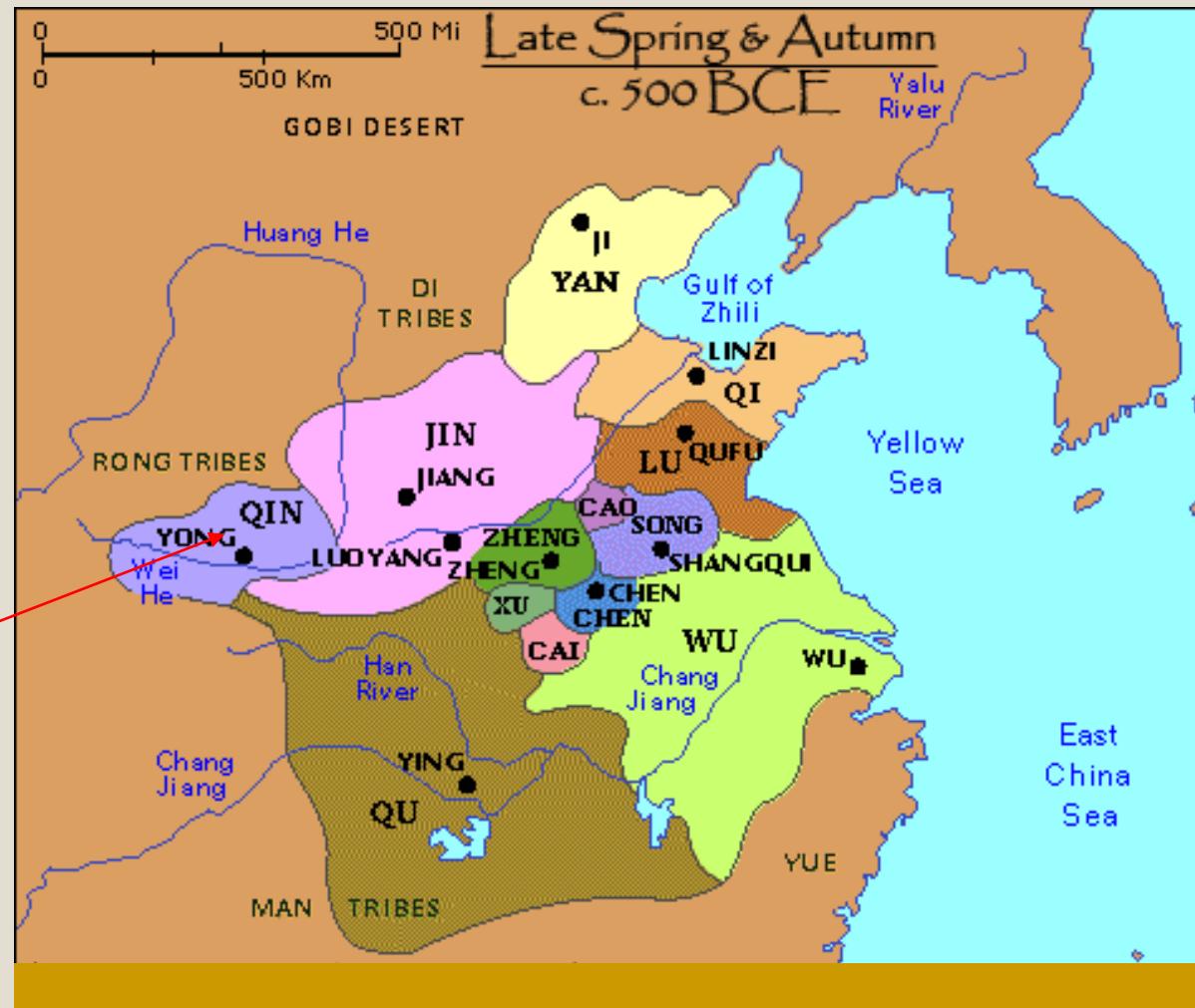
# China during the Western Zhou Period 1046-771 BCE



# China during the Spring and Autumn Period

771-453 BCE

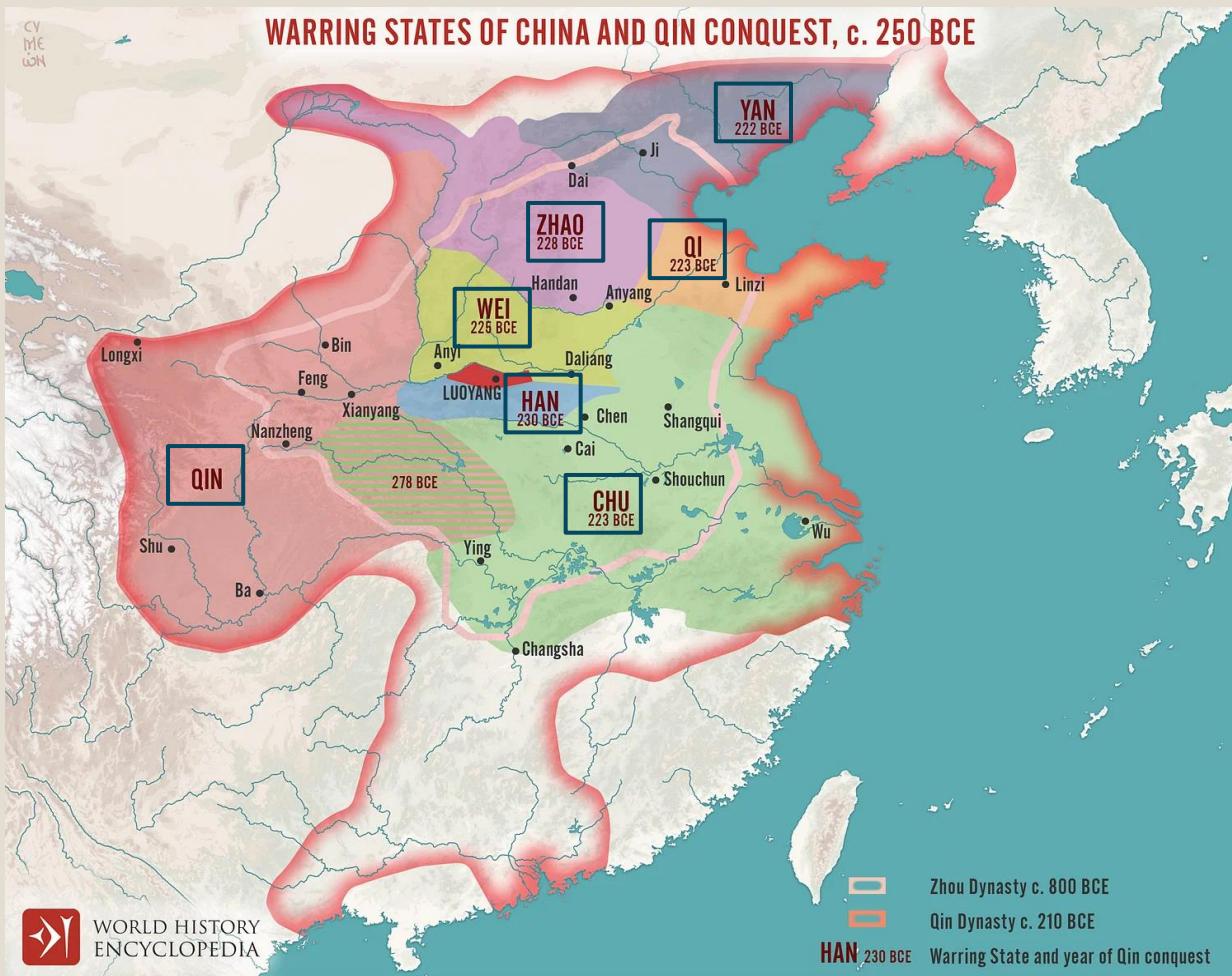
**Qin**  
A peripheral state



## Lecture Two

# Early Confucianism: Human Nature Perfected

# China during the Warring States Period, 453-221 BCE

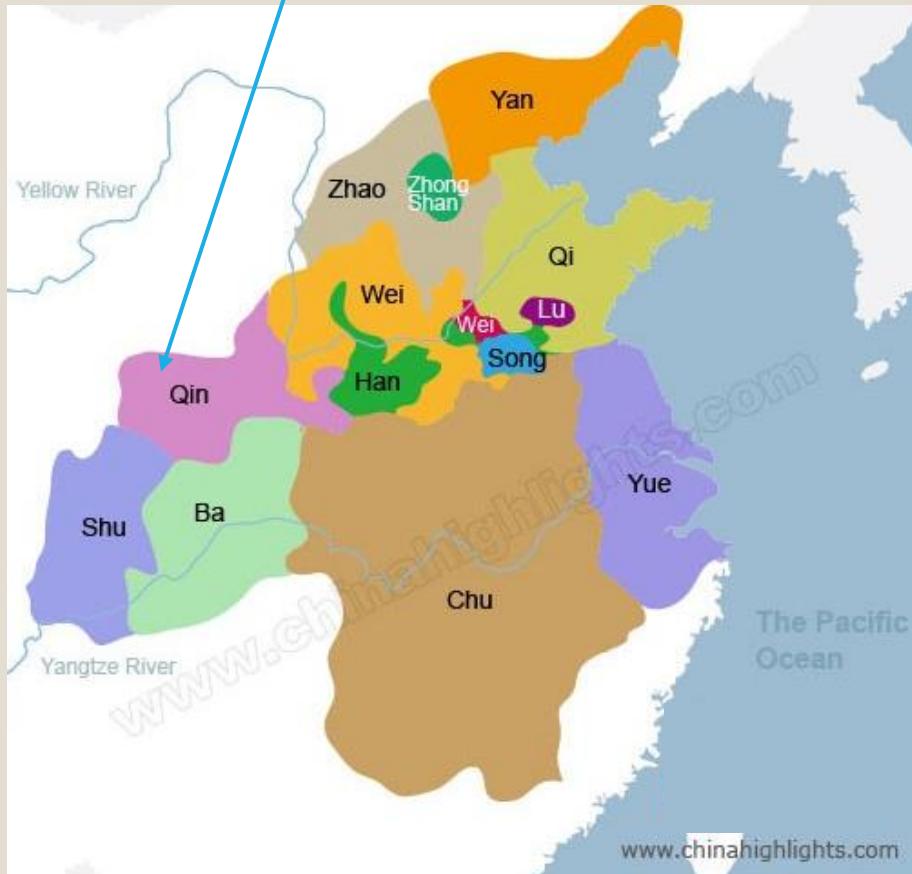


## Lecture Three

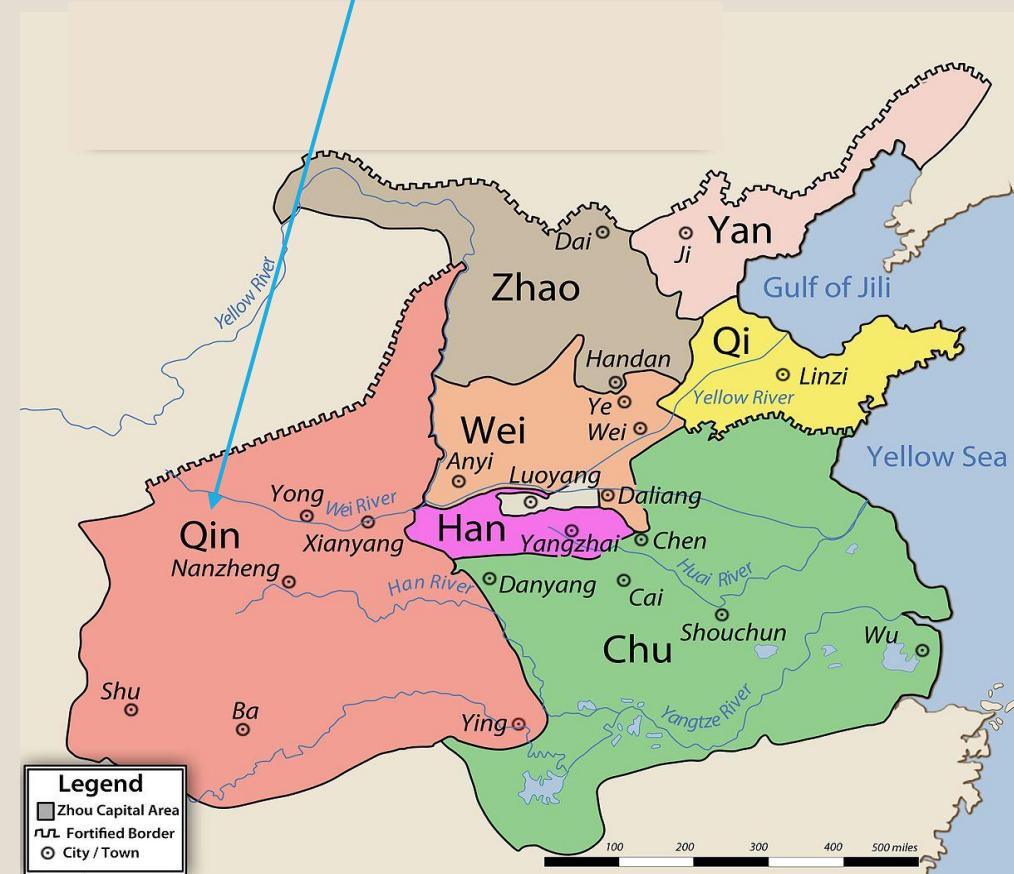
"A Weak People Means a Strong State":  
A Chinese *Realpolitik*

# The Expansion of Qin

Qin ca. 360 BCE



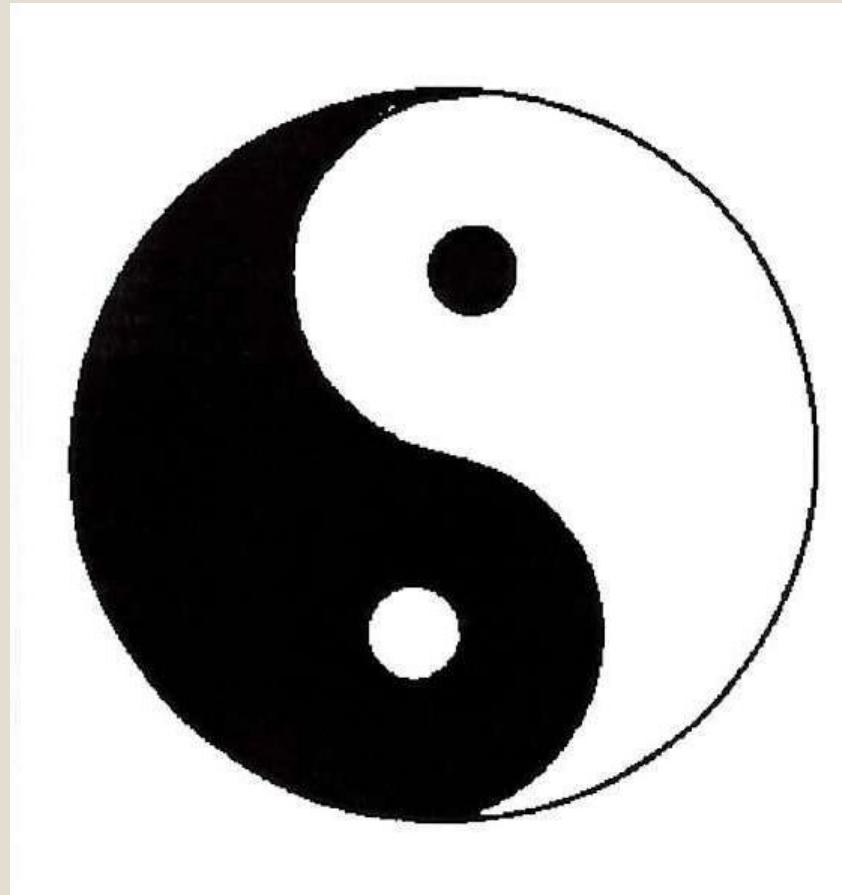
Qin ca. 260 BCE



## Lecture Four

# The Mysterious Female: Immanence and Transcendence in the Daoist Tradition

## The Alternation of Yin and Yang



## The First Two Verses of the *Daodejīng*

有名万物之母 无名天地之始  
道可道非常道 名可名非常名

A dao that can be dao-ed is not the eternal Dao.  
A name that can be named is not the eternal name.

Nameless, it is the beginning of Heaven and earth.  
Named, it is the mother of the ten-thousand-things.

## The First Two Verses of the Daodejīng

有名 无名  
万物之母 天地之始  
名可名非常名 道可道非常道

A dao that can be dao-ed is not the eternal Dao.  
A name that can be named is not the eternal name.



Nameless , it is the beginning of Heaven and earth.



Named , it is the mother of the ten-thousand-things

## The First Two Verses of the Daodejīng

有 无 名 可 道  
名 无 道 可 道  
万物之母 天地之始 可名非常道

A dao that can be dao-ed is not the eternal Dao.  
A name that can be named is not the eternal name.



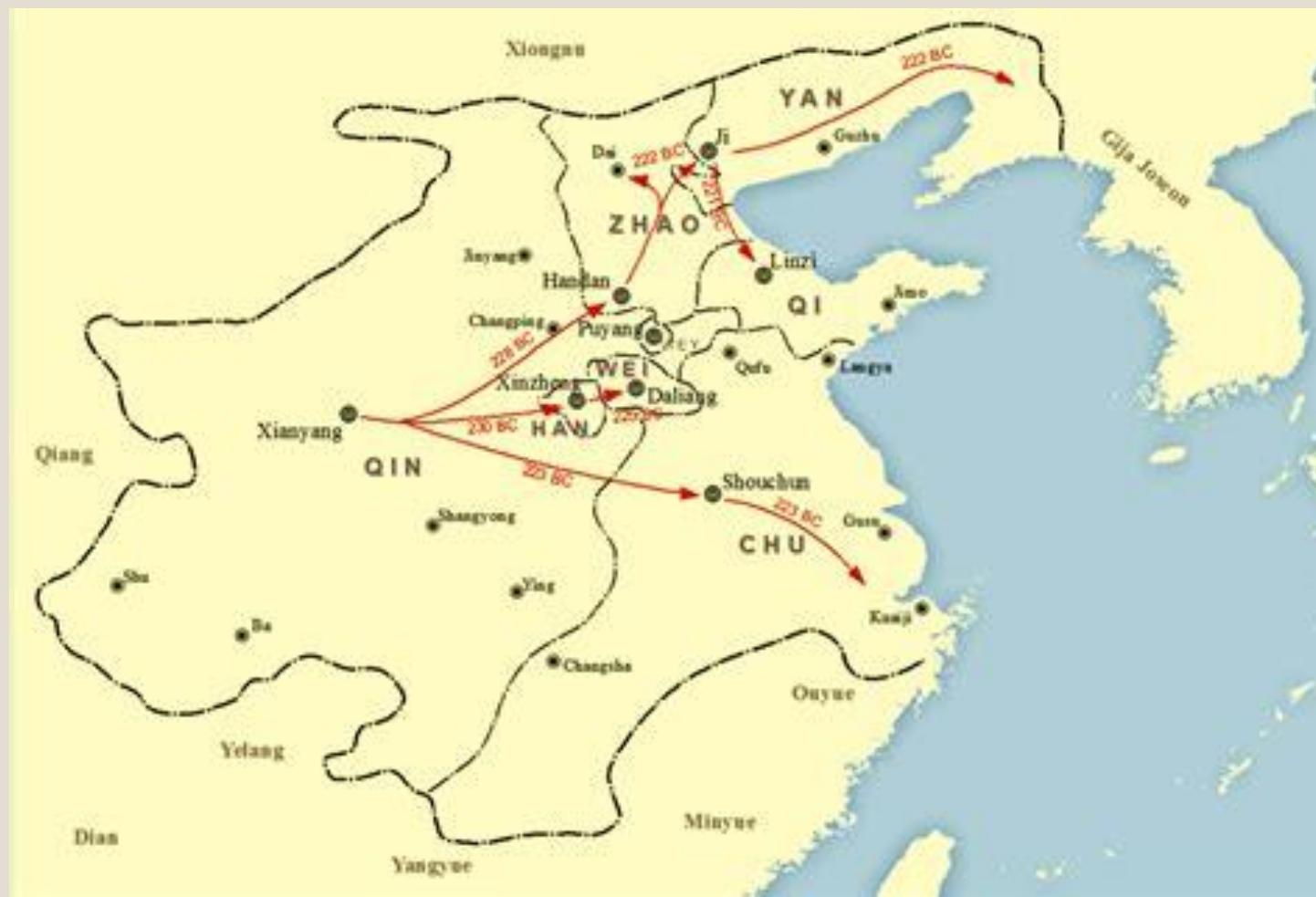
Nonbeing  is called  the beginning of Heaven and earth.



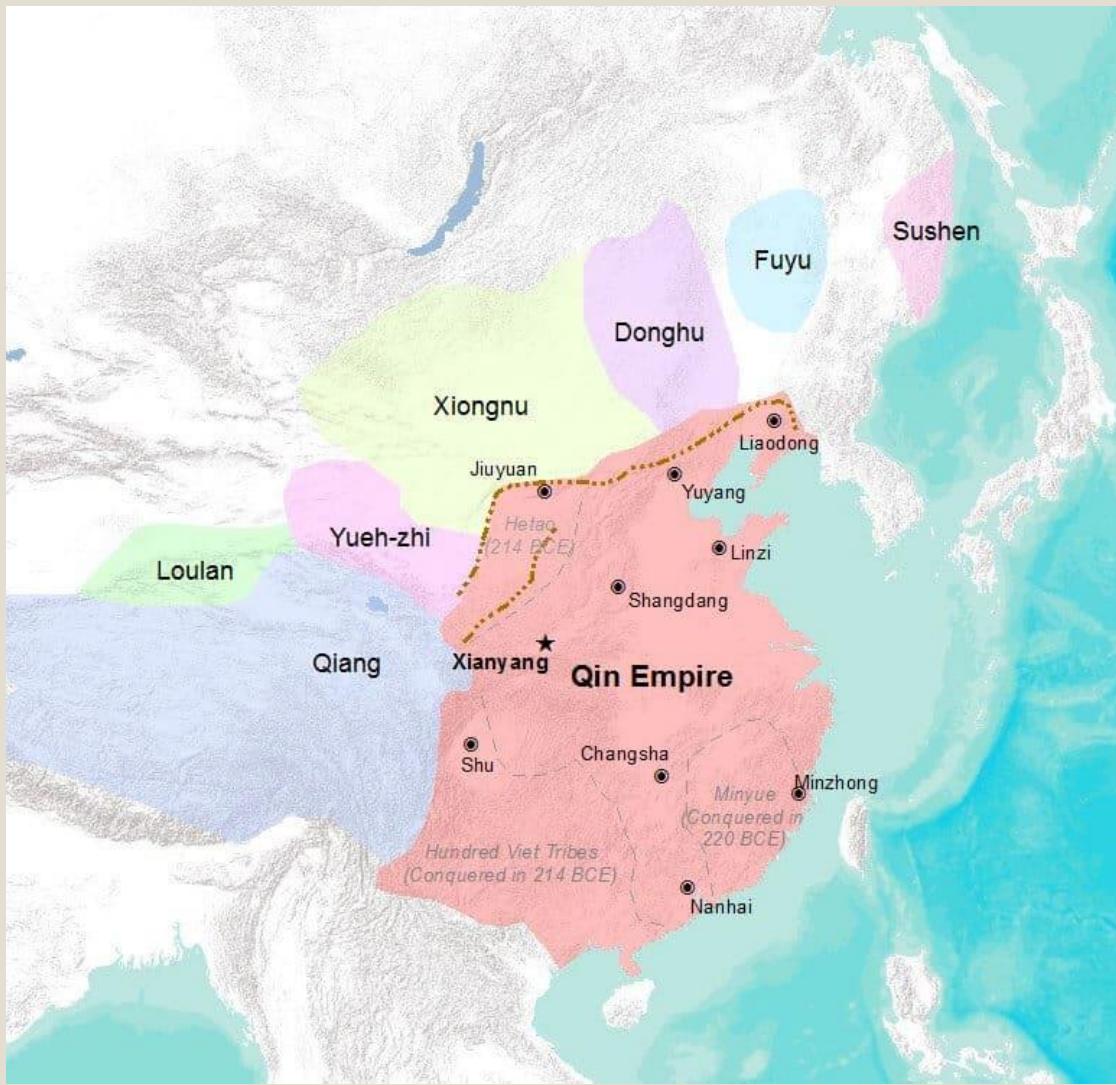
Being  is called  the mother of the ten-thousand-things

## Lecture Five

# The Formation of the Confucian State

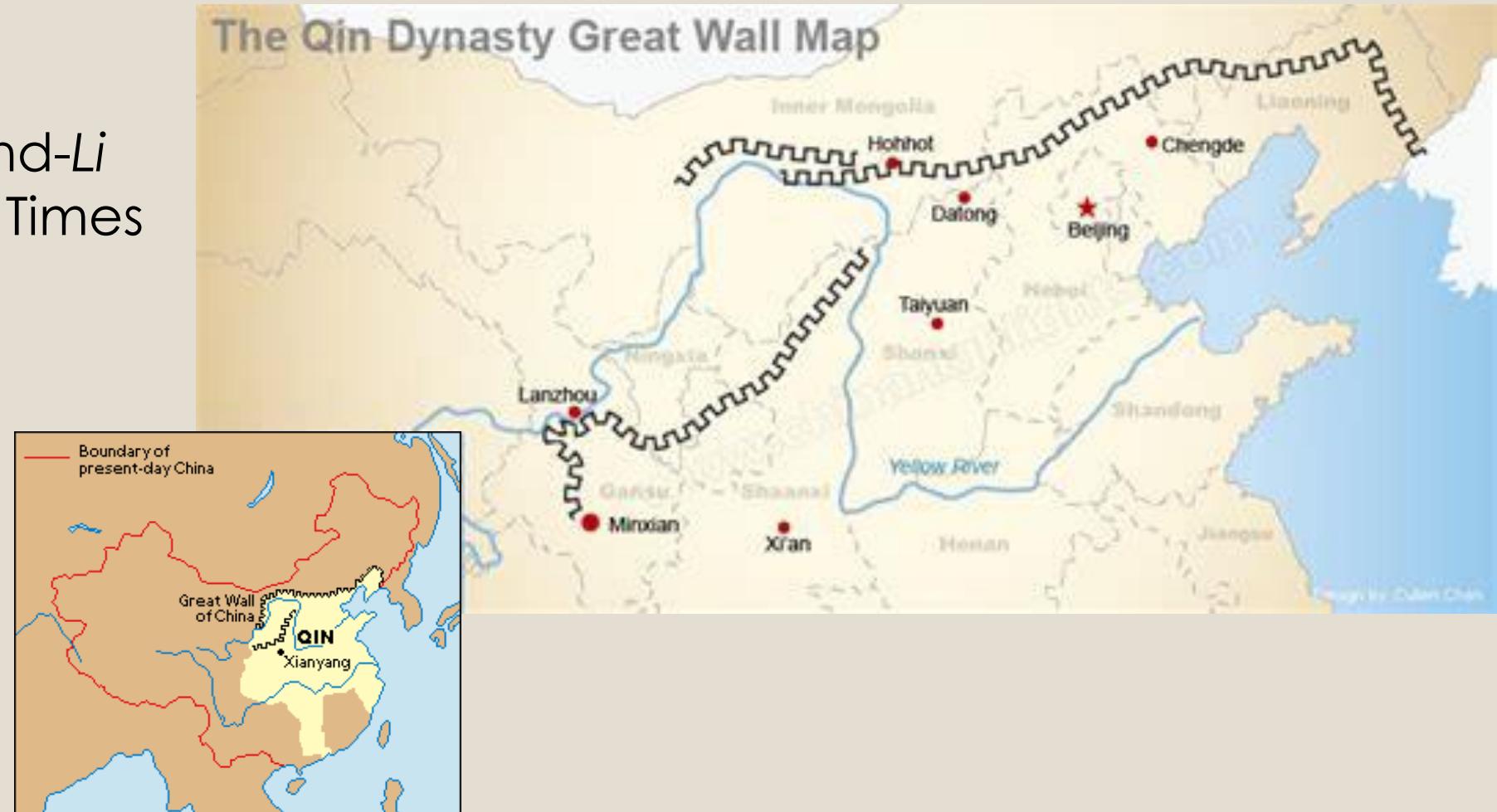


Qin Conquests,  
230-221 BCE



## Qin, the First Chinese Empire 221-206 BCE

## The “Ten-Thousand-Li Long Wall” in Qin Times



# Western (Former) Han Dynasty, 202-9 BCE



# The “Silk Road” ca. 300 BCE—100 CE

