

the territory they deserved, and their loyalty to the emperor often arose. In 154 B.C.E., seven kingdoms revolted against Emperor Jing (188–141 B.C.E.). This short-lived and highly unsuccessful revolt led to the sweeping curtailing of the kingdoms' autonomy, and by 145 B.C.E., many of the powers they had enjoyed had been lost and kings became merely figureheads of governments appointed and controlled by the central government.

Liu Bang's expansion into central Eurasia was relatively unsuccessful as he found himself defeated by the Xiongnu Empire, which had also been expanding in the region. The Western Han remained relatively unsuccessful in this expansion thanks to continual defeats by the Xiongnu until Emperor Wu (156–87 B.C.E.) in the latter half of the 2nd century B.C.E. carried out a massive military campaign to secure central Eurasia and break the Xiongnu's authority in the region.

This aim of centralization was mirrored in the intellectual sphere with Western Han emperors bringing together many scholars to staff the government and engage in many textual projects. The Western Han thus witnessed a great period of collating, editing, and cataloging texts from previous periods, and these endeavors produced many texts that would be read for centuries to come. In 136 B.C.E., five texts, purported as coming from high antiquity, became canonized under Emperor Wu as the classics (*jing*) and become the standard texts in state-sponsored education.

The *Shiji*, one of the first works of history in China and attributed to Sima Tan (ca. 165–110 B.C.E.) and Sima Qian (145/135–86 B.C.E.), compiled by the start of the 1st century B.C.E. set the standard for how history would be written. And proposals of government, often involving commentary on earlier texts, such as the *Chunqiu fanlu* and *Huainanzi* attributed to Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B.C.E.) and the court scholars of Liu An (179–122 B.C.E.), respectively, were also commonly produced as advice to the emperor.

This lively discourse on governance helped lead to the end of the Western Han, as the regent Wang Mang attempted to implement his own policies and interpretation of the classics. Although Wang Mang's attempts to form a new empire with himself at the head were ultimately unsuccessful, they did change

the course of the Han Empire, and led to a growing decentralizing seen in the Eastern Han. Regardless, the massive centralization efforts in the Western Han saw the creation of the first long-lived imperial dynasty in China, and the Western Han would often be held up by later scholars as an exemplar of governance and dynastic power.

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**See Also:** Han, Eastern; Qin Dynasty; Xin Dynasty; Zhou, Western.

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## Health

Similar to other parts of the world in prehistoric times, early humans in Asia thought that illness was caused by evil spirits. Primitive medicines were used in conjunction with other techniques (e.g., incantation, blessing, spells, and shamanic magic) designed to expel evil spirits.

The practice of acupuncture probably dates back to the Neolithic Age (10,000–2000 B.C.E.), as suggested by findings of ancient stone needles in China. Archaeological digs from the Shang dynasty (1600–1100 B.C.E.) in China have revealed medical writings (e.g., hieroglyphs and pictographs of acupuncture and moxibustion) inscribed on oracle bones, which were bones shamans used to perform divination rites. The religio-empirical approach to health, which combines spiritualism and physical study, is characteristic of

medicine in prehistoric times. Anthropologists also noted that individuals in China experienced a deterioration of health because of the diminished food values (i.e., a transition to softer, more extensively processed food) and increased population density during 7000–4000 B.C.E.

Skeletal evidence of the period suggested that there was an increased occurrence of dental cavities and decreased adult stature around 5000–4000 B.C.E. Poor health persisted into the Zhou dynasty (1066–256 B.C.E.) in China, when medicine emerged as a distinctive area of knowledge and practice.

The concepts of health, illness, and disease in east Asia and southeast Asia have been heavily influenced by the concepts and principles in traditional Chinese medicine. *Yangsheng* (literally “nurturing life”) is a fundamental concept in the early history of Chinese medicine. It anchors the discussions of early texts in medical literature. Health and longevity are believed to be achieved and maintained by personal cultivation. They require individuals to adopt practices including dietetics, alchemy, reclusive lifestyle, gymnastic and breathing exercises to stimulate the circulation of *Qi* (i.e., internal energy) throughout the body, sexual cultivation, and visualization meditation. The combination of body development, health preservation, self-healing, and spiritual cultivation reflects the holistic approach that forms the basis of traditional medicine in Asia.

### Ancient Medical Texts

One of the most important ancient texts in Chinese medicine is *Huangdi Neijing*, also known as *The Inner Canon of Huangdi* or *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon*. Various versions of the text are believed to be composed between 450 and 26 B.C.E. It departs from the old shamanistic beliefs that disease was caused by evil spirits. Instead, diseases are caused by individuals' failures in maintaining a balance between the natural effects of diet, lifestyle, emotions, environment, and age. As a result, if one can maintain balance, one can avoid illness.

The concept of preventive health practice is thus embedded in early Chinese medicine. Like most ancient texts of its kind, *Huangdi Neijing* codified practices that had probably been going on for centuries. It has been viewed as the fundamental doctrinal source for Eastern medicine, whose importance is

likened to that of the Hippocratic corpus in Western medicine. It proposes that the universe is composed of various principles, such as Yin and Yang, Qi, and the five elements (i.e., fire, earth, metal, water, and wood). Human health is maintained by the work of these cosmic principles, which represent both physical and spiritual forces. These forces can be understood through rational means, and individuals can stay in balance or restore health by understanding the laws of these forces. These principles have been influential to the medical discourse and theoretical development of Chinese medicine for over 2,000 years and continue today.

Another classic in Chinese medicine is *The Divine Farmer's Herb-Root Classic*, which was published around 200 B.C.E. and was recognized as the earliest Chinese pharmacopoeia. It includes 365 medicines derived from minerals, plants, and animals. The work was attributed to Shennong (literally “Divine Farmer”; a mythical character in oral history in Asia) who was considered the father of agriculture and medicine. Shennong was known to have a transparent body, which allows him to taste a variety of herbs and observe their toxicity and medicinal effects on his organs. The mythology provides insights into how early humans justify and rationalize the use of herbal medicine. The emphasis on herbal medicine is essential in Chinese medicine's influence on the medicinal practices in other Asian countries.

For example, *Kampo* (literally “the way of the Chinese”) medicine is the Japanese study and adaptation of traditional Chinese medicine, which came to Japan between the 7th and 9th centuries. *Kampo* has roots that extend back to ancient China's Han dynasty (200 B.C.E.–220 C.E.). *Kampo* uses most of the Chinese medical system including acupuncture and moxibustion but is primarily concerned with the study of herbs. Similarly, traditional Korean medicine was influenced by Chinese medicine during the Three Kingdoms of Korea (57 B.C.E.–668 C.E.), which led to intense investigation of and publications on domestic herbs in Korea.

Beginning in 200 C.E., across east and southeast Asia, many prominent physicians and scholars developed theories on the basis of the classical medical texts and/or contributed original material, which was later brought in tune with traditional medicine. It is important to note that both traditional Japanese

medicine and traditional Korean medicine developed distinctive therapeutic practices and medical theories that reflected their unique cultural beliefs and environment.

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**See Also:** Chinese Medicine, Early; Food.

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## Imperial Rule

Imperial rule in China was based on legitimacy provided by the "Mandate of Heaven." This concept was adopted, in one variation or another, by most if not all other Asian states that used a similar form of governance. The concept of the Mandate of Heaven centers on the willingness of the supernatural powers of heaven to recognize the right of the emperor and his (or in one case, her) dynasty to rule the land.

Insofar as heaven recognizes the right, therefore, it would be not just a crime but also a sin to plot against the emperor or do anything to constrain the lawful ruler. However, the mandate is not unconditional and if the emperor persistently behaves inappropriately, then it can be withdrawn. Inappropriate behavior can include the realms of personal and family relationships, failing to perform sacred rituals properly, and ignoring misrule in distant provinces. Initially, heaven will indicate its displeasure through natural disasters such as flooding, the change in the course of a river, famine, or plague. Quite when the warning phase becomes a sign that change must come can be determined only on the removal of the current occu-

pant—hence, those who would wish to hurry the process, whether they are potential usurper or peasant insurgent, can know whether they are acting at the behest of heaven only if they are successful.

### Centralized Rule

Imperial rule dates from the inauguration of the Qin dynasty and coincided with the installation of centralized control supplanting feudal decentralization. In place of distribution of resources and privileges based on family connections or reciprocal (usually military service based) relations as common in what are often termed *feudal systems*, imperial rule places the imperial throne as the absolute center of the state and at the peak of a rigidly ordered hierarchy. The identification of the emperor with religious power (as described above) inhibits the plurality of interests in society. In its place is put the law and the imperial court retains power by appointing those judges and officials who determine cases and administer punishments resulting from them. The Imperial Examination system was introduced to integrate a degree of social mobility that supplemented the rewarding of favorites and compromises struck with potential adversaries, which are the stock in trade of political control.

Other institutions were created and maintained, at the expense of the public purse where necessary, to unify the way of thinking and to set precedents and societal norms. Notable among these was the convention that the historians of one reign would complete the official history and records of the preceding reign. Clearly, when the new emperor was the lawful heir of the predecessor, the latter would generally be praised for decisions and achievements made. By contrast, when a new dynasty took over or the incoming emperor had usurped the throne, pressure would be placed to ensure that the official records justified such activities.

Powerful taboos existed to ensure that this procedure took place according to the emperor's desires, strictly within the law of course, which might be supplemented by the incredibly stringent punishments that could be inflicted when required: legendarily, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty ordered the deaths of those who had offended and the deaths of all relatives of the unfortunate victim until the seventh generation.