



FACT SHEET

ANCIENT CHINA

The story of ancient China covers 11,000 years of history. That history is divided into dynasties. The Shang Dynasty is also known as the Age of Bronze. During this dynasty, artisans worked with metal in new ways. China's first emperor came to power during the Ch'in (Qin) Dynasty. Ancient China was unified during this dynasty.

During the Han Dynasty, China's boundaries were extended. All records were kept in a central place, the salt and iron mines were organized, and state factories mass-produced iron and steel tools, silk, and paper.

The T'ang Dynasty is known as the Golden Age of Ancient China. Trade moved beyond the boundaries of China. Art, music, and literature were prized.

Ancient China was surrounded by mountains, desert, and sea. The people had little contact with the rest of the world. Many of the people were farmers. They worked with wood and stone tools to grow millet and rice. The first villages grew up along the banks of the Huang He River. Soon farming spread south to the plains of the Yangtze River.

The people of ancient China were strictly divided into four main classes. The scholars and gentry could read and write. The peasants produced food on small plots. They cut terraces into the slopes of the hills. The artisans worked with their hands. The merchants were responsible for trade.

FOOD

Most people ate a simple diet of beans, grains, and vegetables. Millet, barley, wheat, and rice were steamed, boiled, or formed into noodles. Vegetables eaten included lotus roots, bamboo shoots, gourds, yams, leeks, and radishes. Meat was eaten in small quantities. Rich and poor people used spices, salt, sugar, honey, and soy sauce to flavor dishes. Food was chopped finely and cooked quickly in a wok. Food was eaten with chopsticks. Tea was a favorite drink.

SHELTER

The family was very important to ancient Chinese people. Confucius, China's greatest teacher, taught that children must be devoted to their parents. Often, many generations lived in the same house. Women lived to serve and obey their husbands. Because the Chinese believed that ancestors watched over the family, they have always made offerings to dead relatives to ensure that their souls are at peace. Even the poorest households kept a shrine to their ancestors.

During the Han Dynasty, the rich lived in large homes and palaces made of mud and wood. In the summer, farmers lived on the land near their fields in houses made of bamboo branches. In the winter, they moved to their permanent homes in the villages. Winter homes were drafty, one-room houses with thatched or tile roofs, dirt floors, and no furniture. The walls were made of mud.

CLOTHING

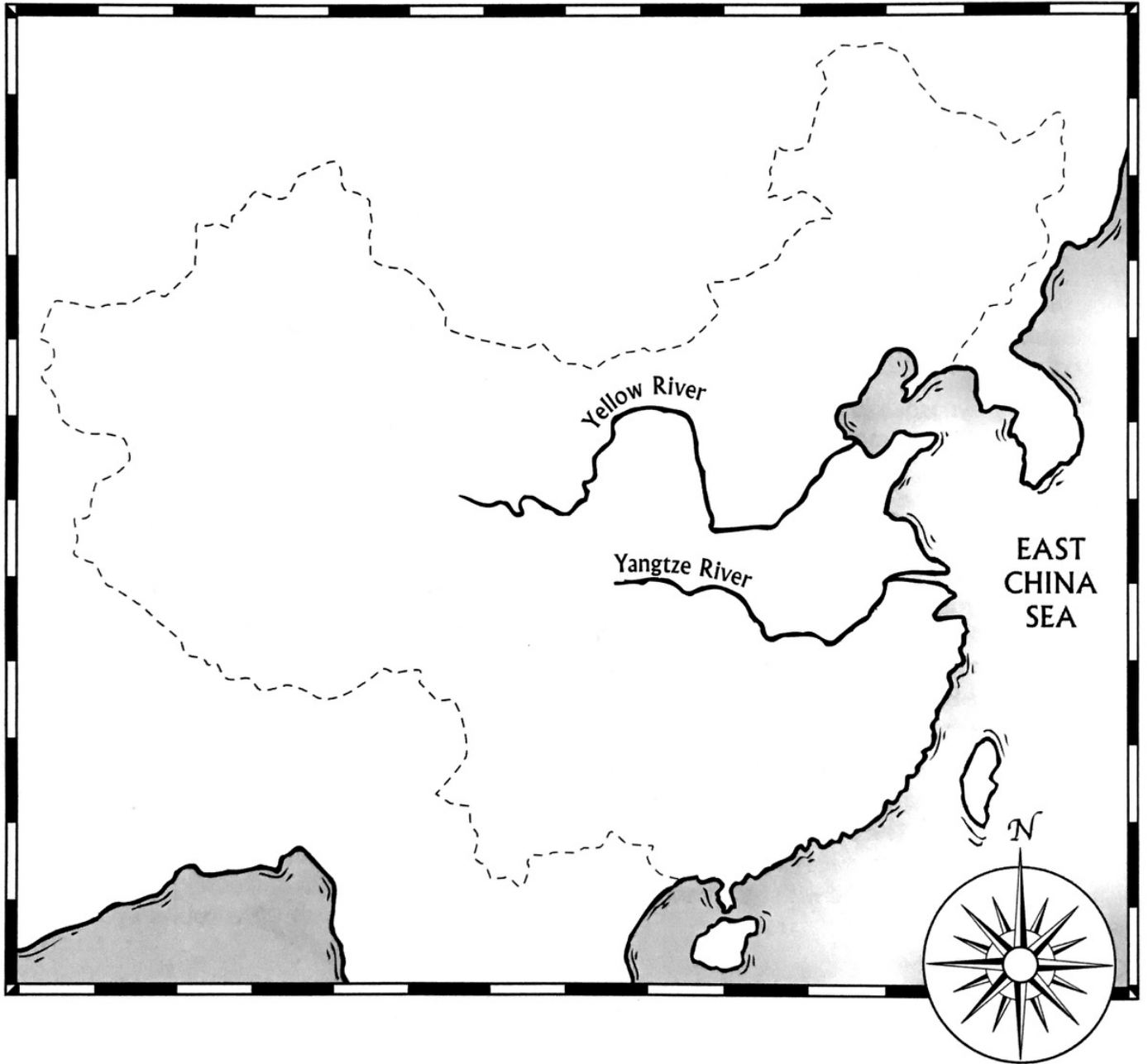
Clothes identified the class of the person wearing them. High-ranking Chinese wore silk. The men wore loose robes with weighted sleeves. The women wore long skirts and jackets over short-sleeved upper garments. Peasants wore long shirt-like garments of hemp. They stuffed their clothes with paper and cloth to stay warm in the winter. Shoes were very important during T'ang times. Peasants wore straw sandals. Nobles wore fine cloth slippers.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Ancient China is known for its many inventions. They invented such everyday things as paper, kites, yo-yos, jump ropes, and umbrellas. They were the first to invent gunpowder, the compass, the wheelbarrow, and the earthquake detector. Early Chinese people discovered how to combine certain herbs for medicine. They made the first real porcelain pottery. For centuries, only the Chinese knew how to make silk.



ANCIENT CHINA



Ancient China began around the Huang He River (also called the Yellow River). It grew into a large civilization. Ancient China was surrounded by the Himalaya Mountains and the Gobi Desert. The Chinese built the Great Wall of China to keep invaders out. These things made travel to other parts of the world difficult. The people of ancient China had to invent many things for themselves.





In the southern part of China, people ate rice, steamed dumplings, and fish. In the north they ate wheat noodles instead of rice. They liked vegetables such as bamboo shoots, leeks, and radishes. They also ate fruits such as plums, oranges, and peaches. They used salt, soy sauce, sugar, ginger, and garlic to season foods. **Chopsticks** were used to pick up the food to eat. Their favorite drink was hot tea.

Farmers lived in one- or two-story mud houses. They had tile or thatched roofs. People in the city lived in cramped mud houses close to each other. The rich lived in large homes that were built around courtyards. The **emperors** lived in palaces. The Chinese believed it was good to have grandparents, parents, and children all living together.





Rich people wore colorful silk shirts and pants. They also wore fancy silk robes with long sleeves. The rich wore fine cloth slippers. Only the emperor could wear the color yellow. **Peasant** farmers wore long shirtlike garments over short pants. Their clothes were made of rough plant fibers. Peasants wore straw sandals.

The Chinese were the first to learn how to make silk. They invented paper. They wrote in beautiful **calligraphy**. They made gunpowder and fireworks. They invented the compass and the wheelbarrow. They made the first earthquake detector. They also made fun toys such as kites, yo-yos, and jump ropes.

一 二 三
四 五 六
七 八 九

