



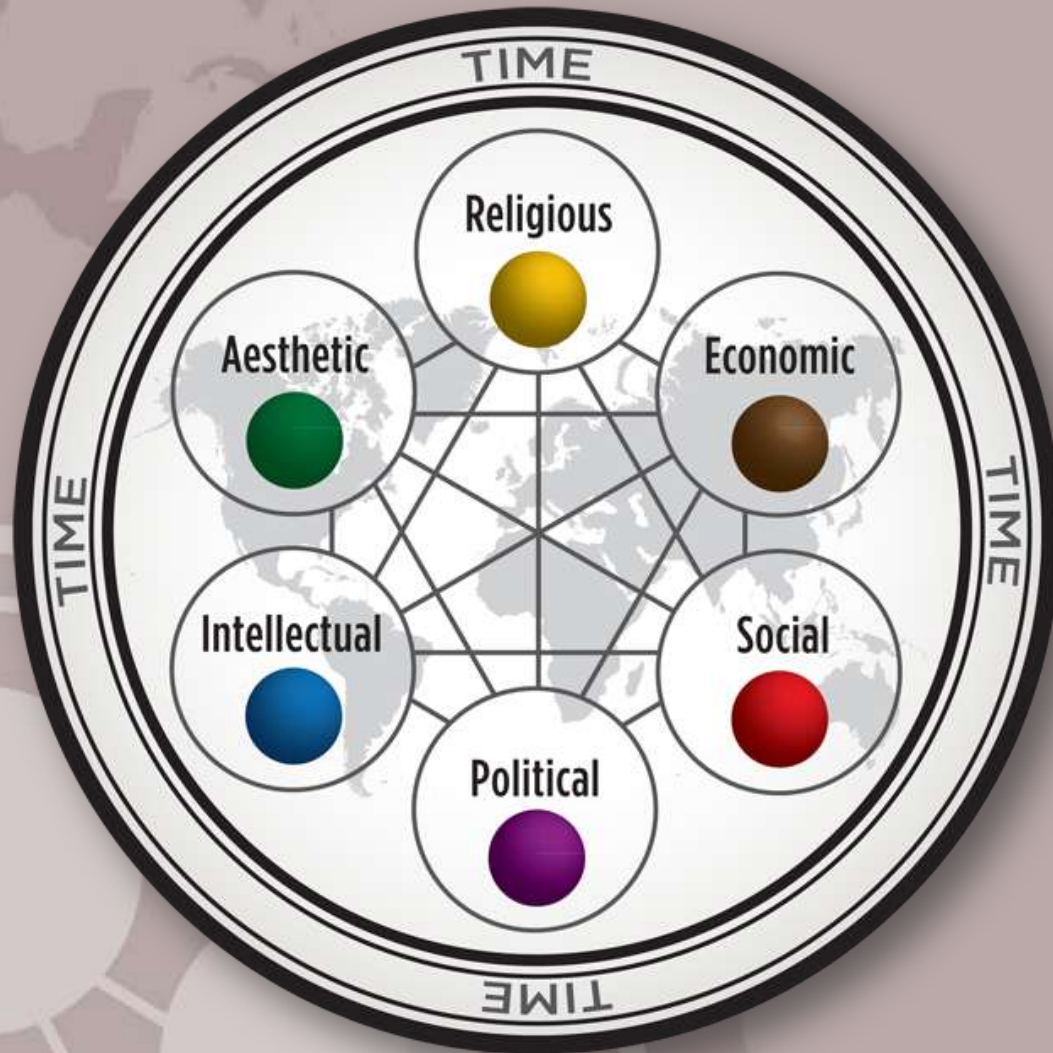
History

a cultural approach

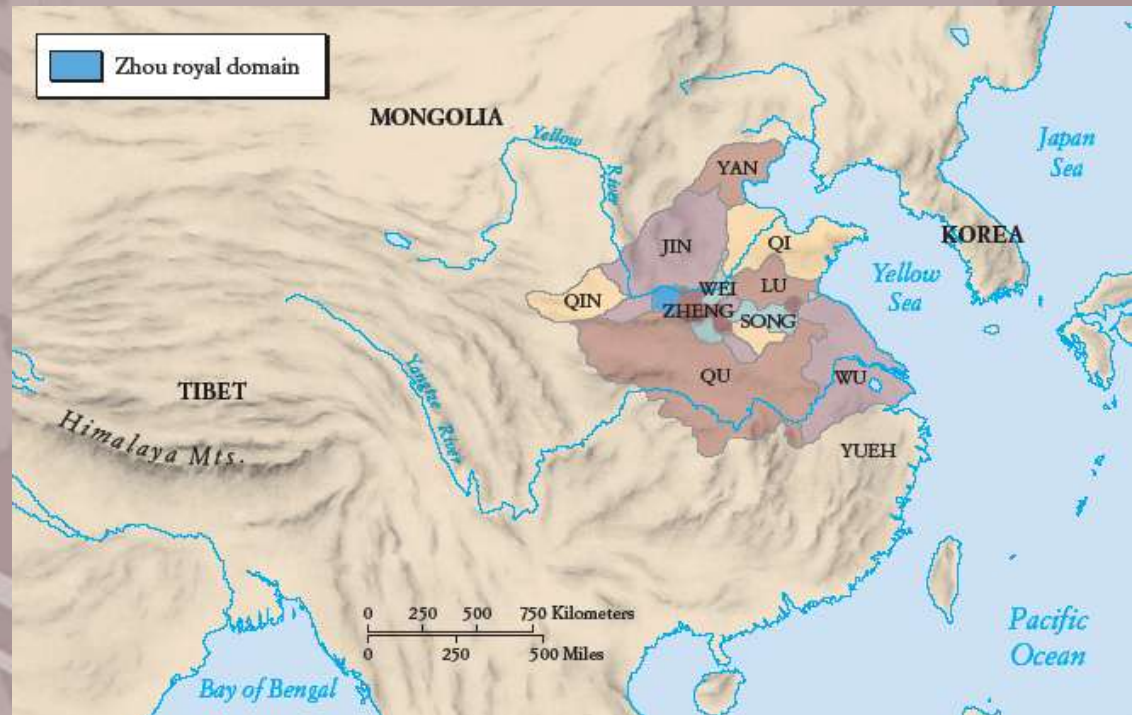
Ancient China to 500 BCE

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Time and Geography



Ancient China



Earliest China: Shang Dynasty

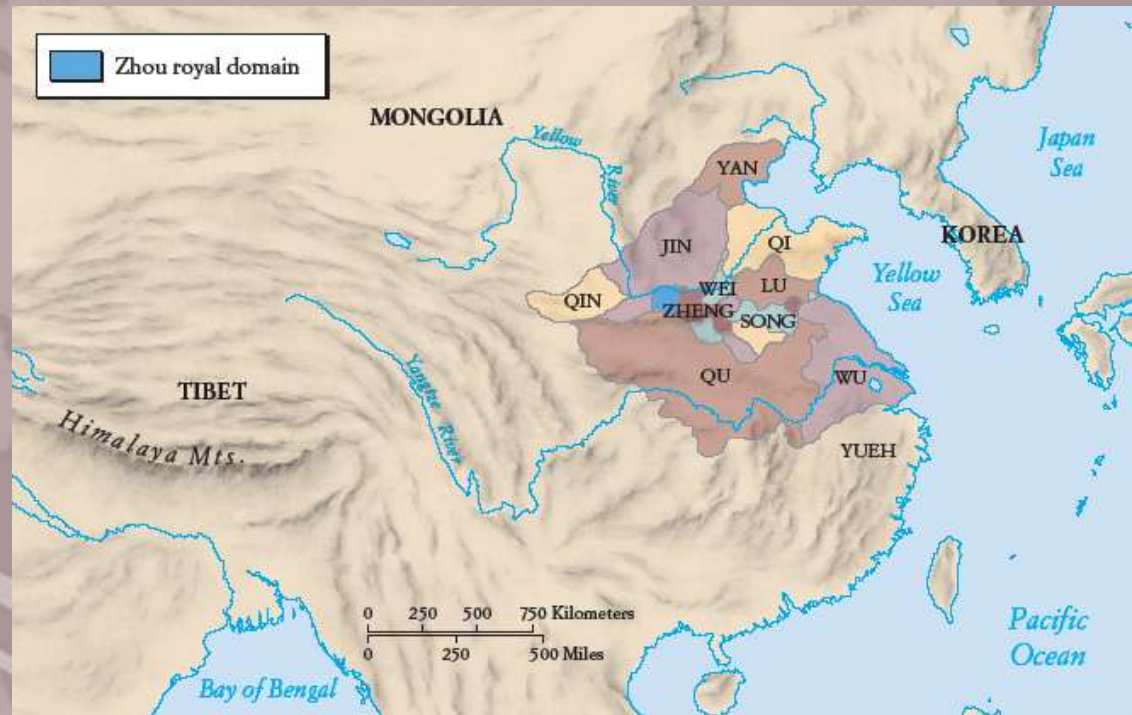
Neolithic and Bronze Age China

- China isolated from outside influences
- Long series of dynastic monarchies
- Warfare and invasion by nomads, Turco-Mongolian
- Yellow and Yangtze Rivers: Neolithic Chinese settlements
- Political unification to manage floods and labor for levee construction
- Agriculture and metalworking originated independently
- Chinese religion: worship of ancestors and nature spirits
- Hsia, first dynasty

Shang Dynasty

- Two important innovations: bronze casting and writing
- Strictly hierarchical society
 - Powerful king with warrior court
 - Skilled artisans, small traders in towns
 - Peasants (majority)
- Believed in deities and ancestor spirits who controlled natural forces
- Public cult of the royal ancestors
- Oracle bones used to discern divine wishes

Ancient China



SOCIAL



Chinese Life

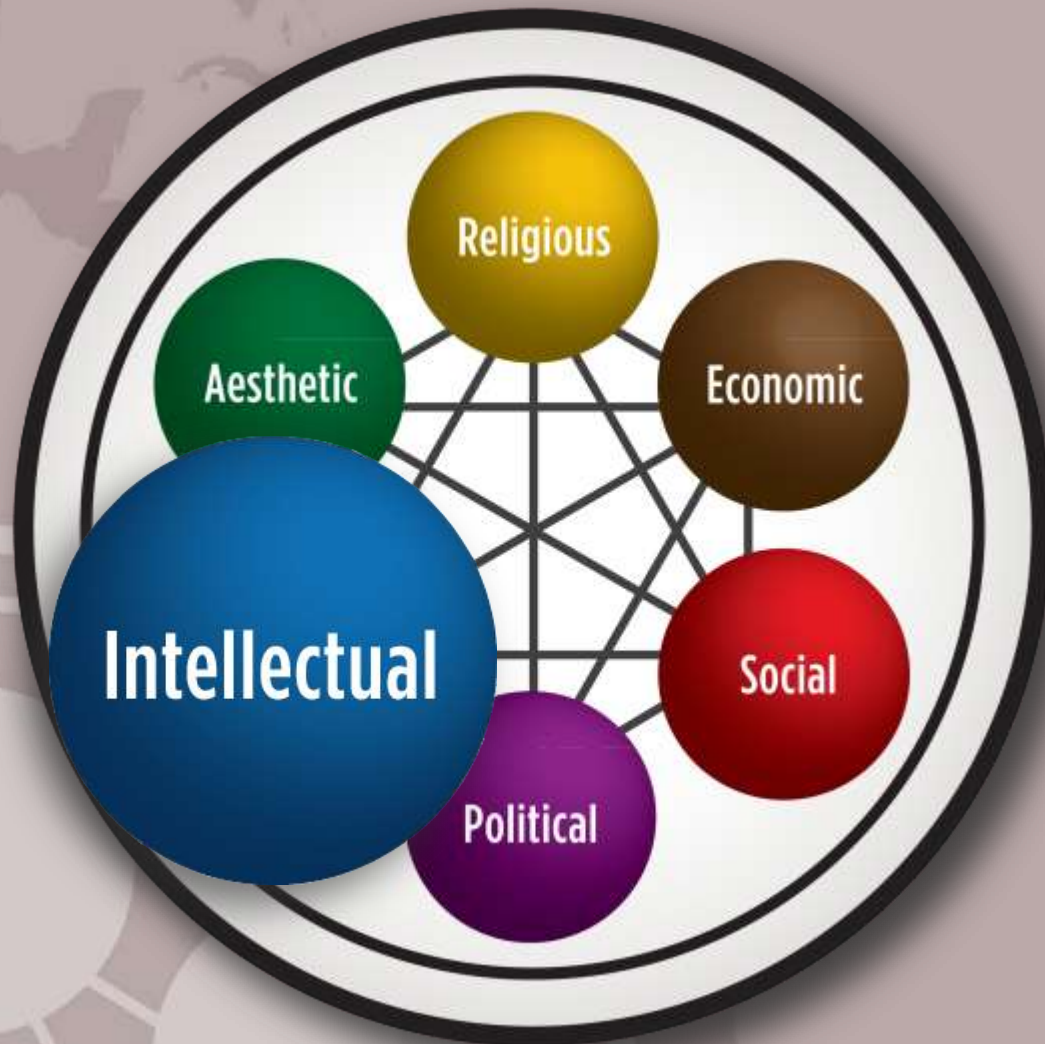
Fundamental Aspect:

- Supreme importance of family
- Reverence for ancestors and aged
- Emphasis on this world
- Importance of education, literacy



They showed
reverence for the
elderly

INTELLECTUAL



Writing

- Beginnings date to about 1500 BCE
- Originally pictographic, then developed huge vocabulary of signs called logographs
- Single logographs may represent several words
- Students had to memorize about 5000 logographs to be literate



Chinese logographs

Writing

- Richest vocabulary, refinement of all ancient languages
- Earliest writing found on oracle bones
- Immensely important in unifying groups which came to call themselves “Chinese”



Oracle bones pit at Yin

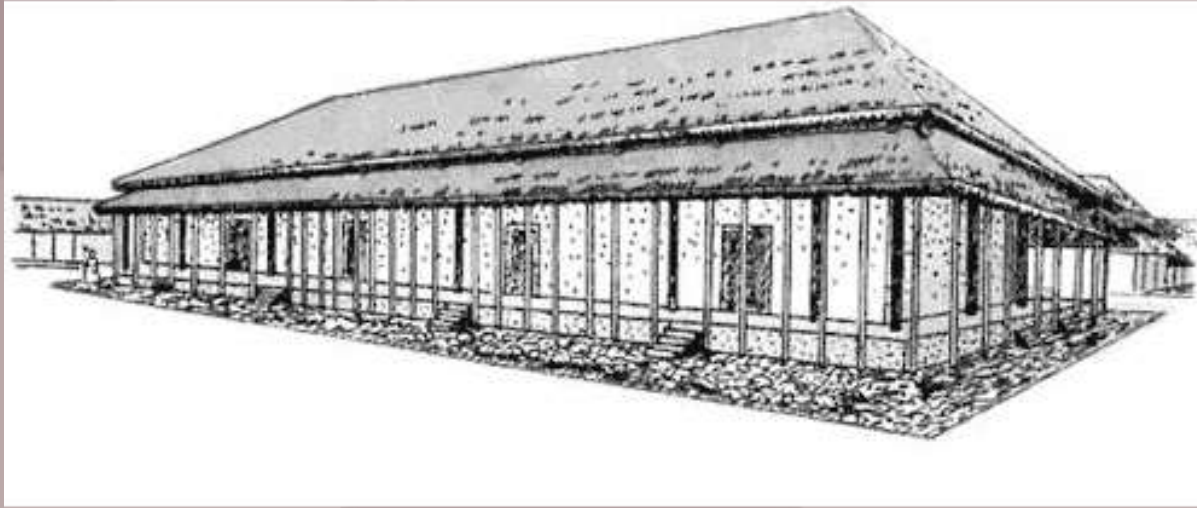
Art and Architecture

- Bronze work
 - Technical excellence, artistic grace
 - Metal technology generally advanced
 - Cast iron and copper widely used



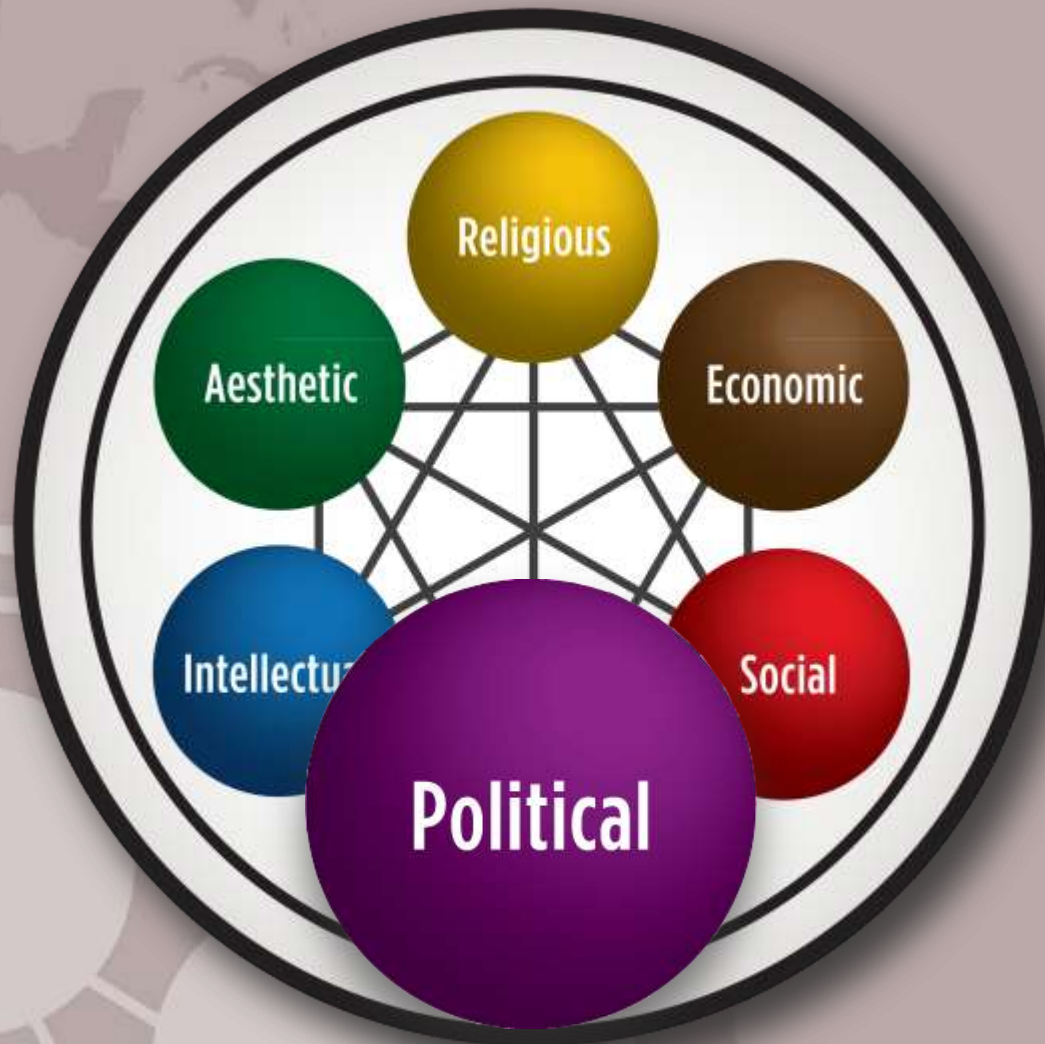
Shang dynasty
tools

Art and Architecture



- Buildings
 - Large palaces, strong forts
 - Distinctive architectural style developed

POLITICAL



Zhou Dynasty

- Nomadic invaders from borderlands to the west
- Over 700 years of rule, Zhou extended China's borders
- Extensive literature survived: history, records of all kinds



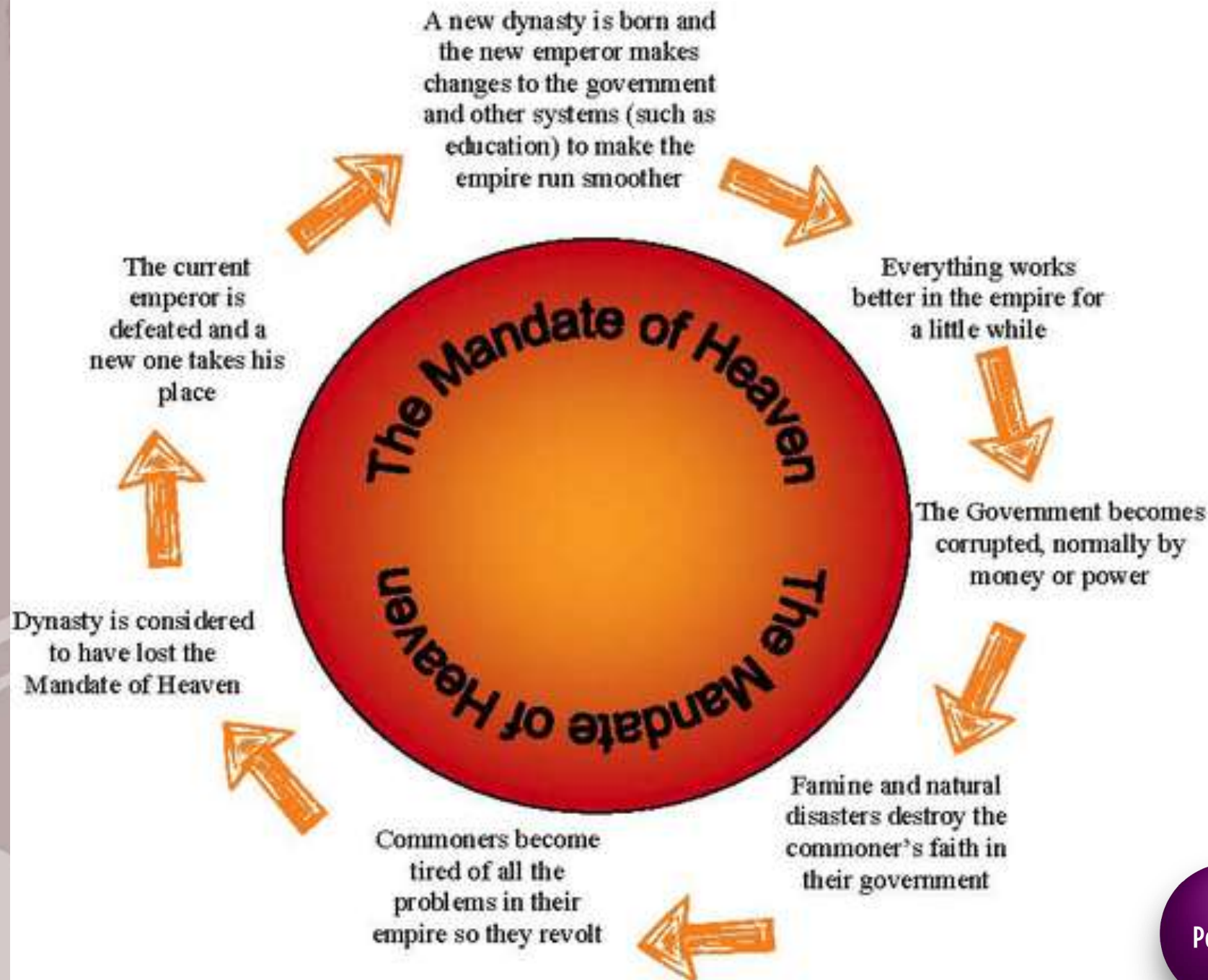
Zhou Dynasty lasted
from 1027 to 256
BCE

Zhou Dynasty

- Mandate of Heaven
 - Vote of confidence for ruler from gods
 - As long as he ruled well and justly, he kept the mandate
 - If he betrayed the mandate, he had to be replaced
 - Highly influential idea in Chinese history



The Mandate of Heaven was the system by which the Chinese thought leaders were divinely chosen



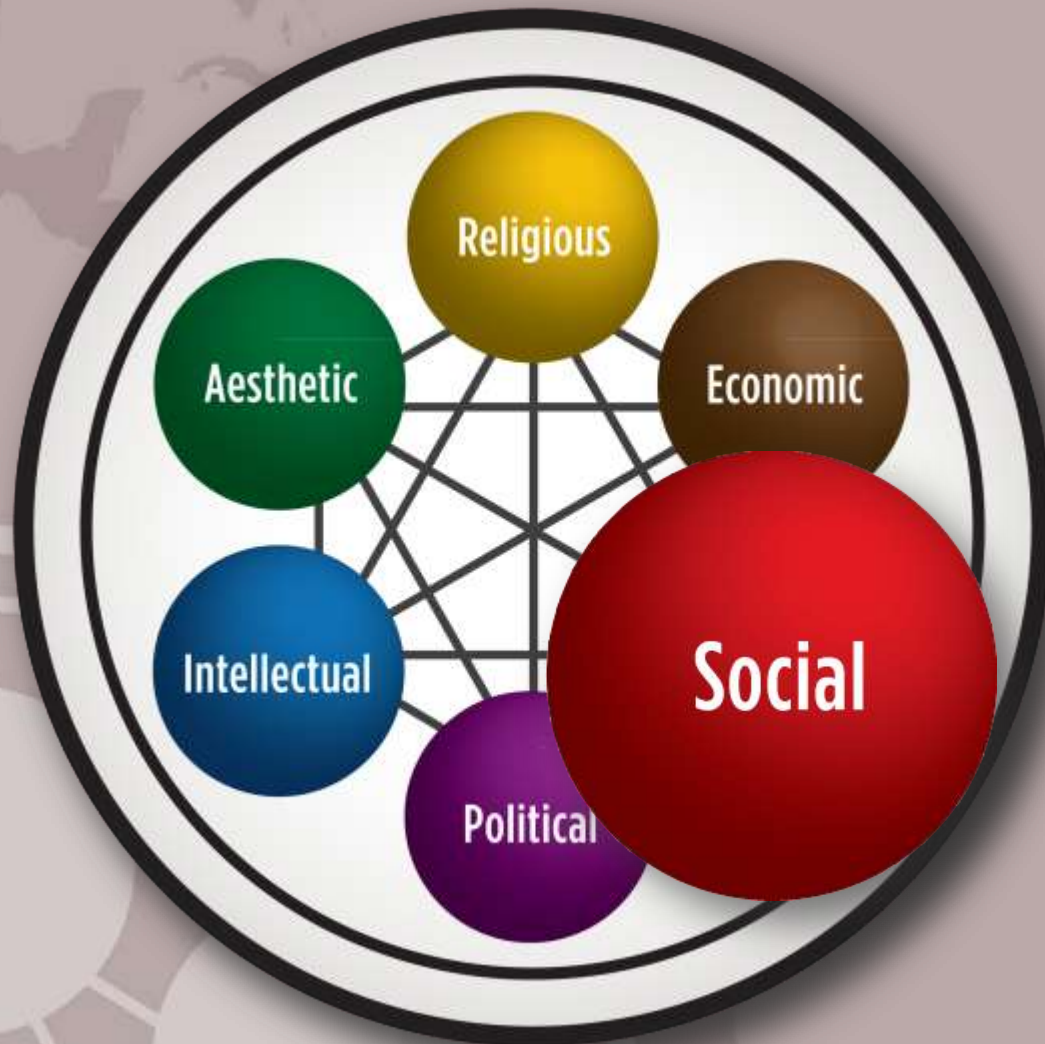
Zhou Dynasty

- First rulers were powerful military men
 - Feudal society developed
 - Local aristocratic power increased; weakened royal government
 - By 400 BCE, central power broke down completely



Chinese soldier

SOCIAL



Cultural and Daily Life

- Great advances in all arts, crafts, technology
 - High demand for metal, jade wares, salt, and silk
 - Traded goods for horses
 - Nomad's war chariot inspired invention of horse harness
 - Effective for wars and for 'beasts of burden'
- Peasants were moderately prosperous, rarely enslaved, majority were sharecropping tenants

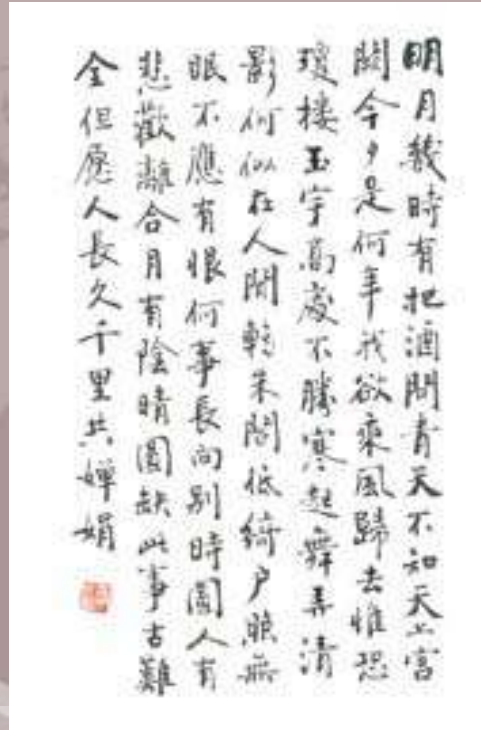


Zhou dynasty chariot

AESTHETIC



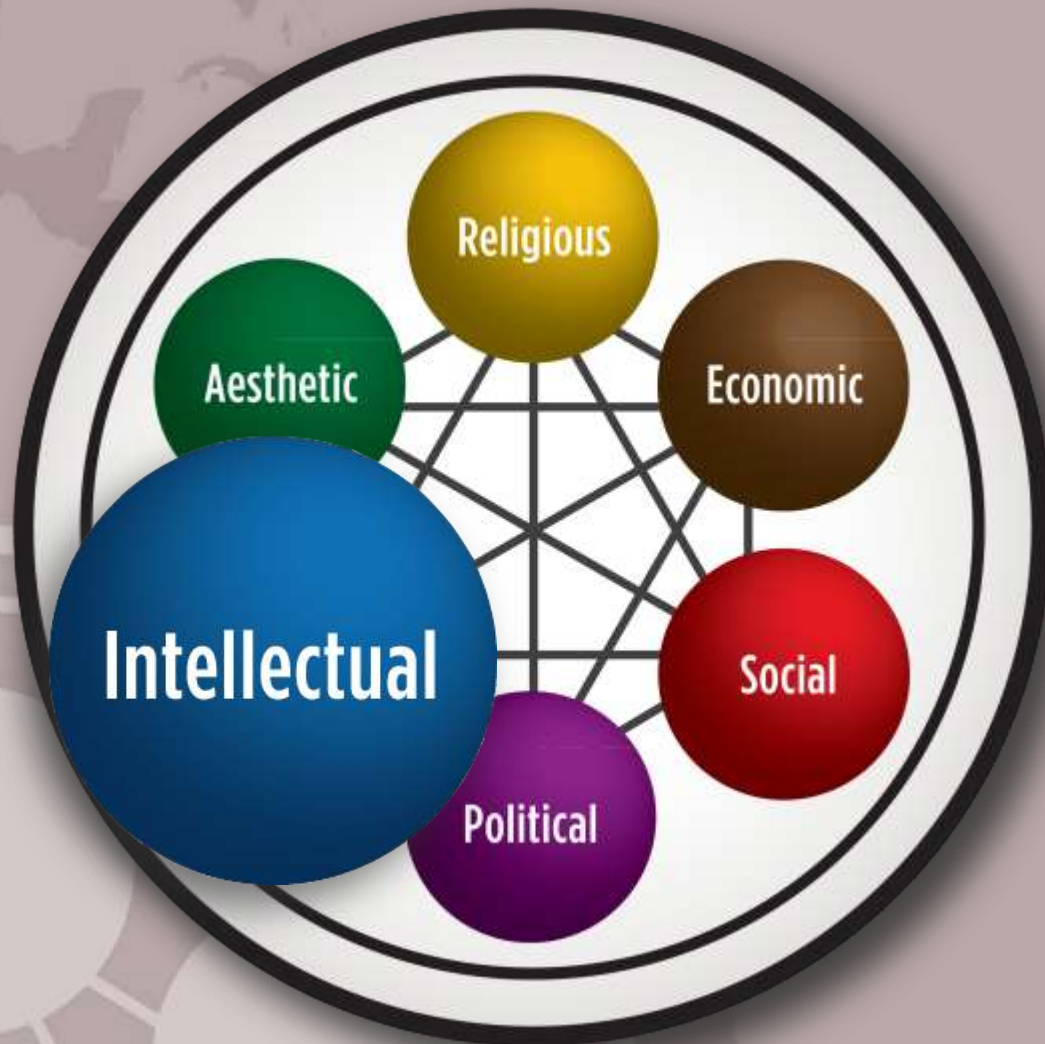
Cultural and Daily Life



A Chinese poem

- Literary arts
 - Earliest surviving books date to 800 BCE
 - Professional historians wrote chronicles of rulers
 - Poetry, calligraphy

INTELLECTUAL



Metals and Salt

Iron vessel



- Manufacturing and trade important
- Shang, Zhou, Qin monopolized warfare and public religion controlled access to bronze weapons and ritual objects
- 6th C BCE - iron was used for tools, utensils, sacred objects, and weapons

ECONOMIC



Metals and Salt

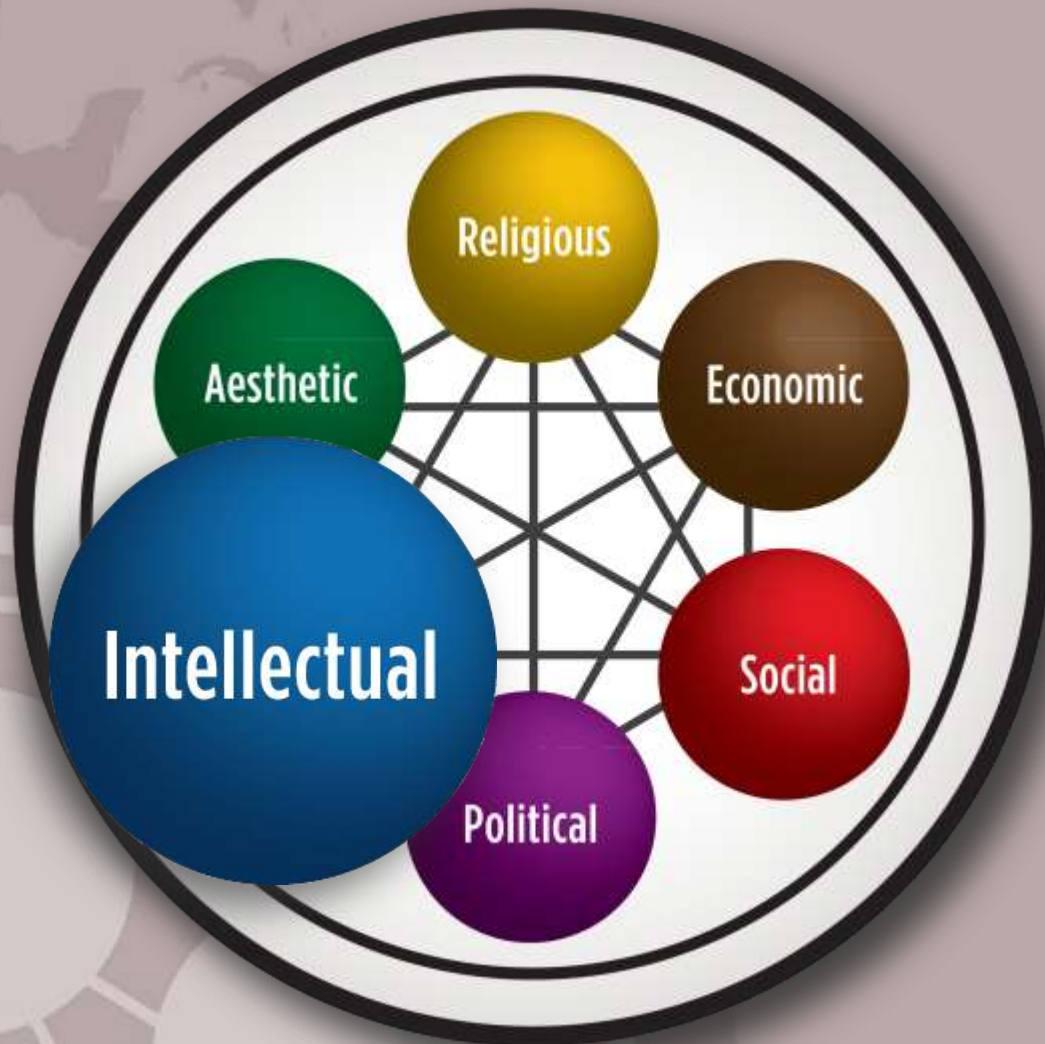


- Iron plowshare raised agricultural yield resulting in 400% population growth
- Government had salt monopoly to create tax revenue for armies – 50-80% tax from salt

Silk

- Silk played important role in political economy
- Usefulness:
 - ancestral offerings in public ritual
 - prized for its beauty and easy to dye
 - medium for writing and painting
 - used as currency to buy war horses
 - source of tax revenue

INTELLECTUAL



Confucius and Confucian Philosophy

Confucius:

- Extremely influential figure
 - Molder of patterns of education
 - Authority on true Chinese actions



Confucius

Confucius and Confucian Philosophy

Confucian Philosophy

- Practical interests centered on ethical, political relations
- Chinese family is the model
 - State should be like harmonious family
 - Headed by males
 - Each person has rights and duties
 - Women scarcely existed

Confucius



Confucius and Confucian Philosophy

Gentility (courtesy, justice, moderation) was chief virtue

- Rich and strong had obligation to poor and weak
- Proper role for gentleman was in government

Influence:

- Rulers judged according to his guidelines
- Educated officials (mandarins, *shi*) were governing class
- Confucius had a low opinion of traders
 - merchants at the bottom of the social ladder
- Rulers came to prefer status quo, harmony over change
- Contempt for new ideas / Fear of change
- Distrust of foreigners

Rivals to Confucius

- Daoism
 - Concentrated on nature, following the “Way”
 - Based on Lao Zi’s *“The Way of the Dao”*
 - Best government is least government



Lao Zi

Rivals to Confucius



The ba gua, a symbol commonly used to represent the Dao and its pursuit

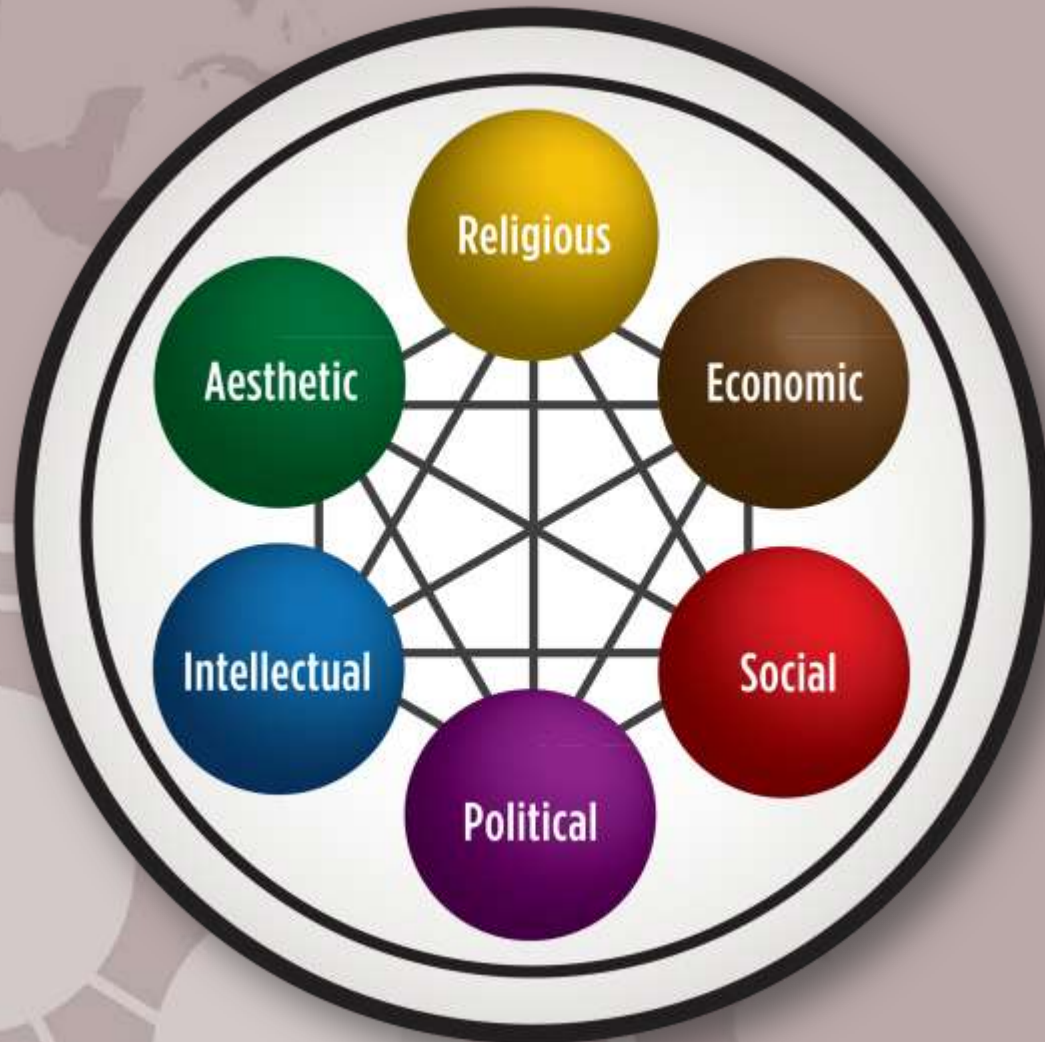
- Daoism (cont.)
 - *Way of Nature* is perceived through meditation, observation
 - Man must seek harmony of parts of the whole - avoid all extremes
 - Eventually degenerated into peasant superstition

Rivals to Confucius

Legalism

- Philosophy of government rather than private life
- Popularized during Era of the Warring States
- Justification for applying force when persuasion fails
- Sees people as inclined to evil selfishness, so government must restrain them
- Strict censorship – crush independent thought

REVIEW



Discussion Questions

1. Writing – it is so basic to modern society that we scarcely give it a thought. Yet it was an amazing advance for social development. What advantages did writing bring to China? What limitations existed in their writing?
2. Confucius adamantly taught gentility as the most important virtue of the public official. What do you think he might say about modern politics if he was alive today?



History

a cultural approach



COLUMBUS STATE

UNIVERSITY