

# Lesson 4 The Legacy of Ancient China

## MAIN IDEAS

**Geography** The Silk Roads brought cultural and economic changes to China.

**Belief Systems** Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism and Daoism had a lasting influence on East Asia.

**Science and Technology** During Han times, China made many advances in technology, agriculture, and trade.

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## The Silk Roads

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What kinds of goods moved along the Silk Roads?

### A Trans-Eurasian Link

- During Han Dynasty, only Chinese knew how to make silk
  - silk opened trade, increased contact with the West
- **Silk Roads**—trade routes carried silk, other goods to and from China
  - **trans-Eurasian** trails crossed central Asia to Mesopotamia, Europe
  - caravan trails were well established by 100 B.C.
- Silk, paper, pottery went west; metals, gems, horses came east

### Cultural Diffusion

- **Cultural diffusion**—the spread of ideas, customs
  - Silk Roads helped spread military methods, Buddhism, styles to China
  - Chinese art, silks, pottery influenced western cultures

## **The Spread of Buddhism**

- During Han Dynasty, Buddhist missionaries took Silk Roads to China
  - Buddhism spread to Japan and Korea from China
- Chinese Buddhists modified the religion to fit their own traditions

### **REVIEW QUESTION**

Why were the Silk Roads important to Chinese civilization?

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# Influential Ideas and Beliefs

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How important were Confucianism and Daoism?

## Confucianism

- Confucius' ideas of social duty still important in Chinese villages
- Confucianism became influential philosophy in Japan, Korea, Vietnam

## Daoism

- Daoism philosophy had lasting influence in China
  - by sixth century it was a religion; had priests, rituals, writings
- Unlike Confucianism, Daoism remained primarily a Chinese belief

## REVIEW QUESTION

Where is Confucianism practiced today?

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# Chinese Inventions and Discoveries

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** In which aspects of Chinese life did the Han make great advances?

## Agricultural Improvements

- Chinese inventions made more grain available, farmers' lives easier
- Inventions included:
  - better plows
  - collar harness
  - wheelbarrow
  - watermill

## Paper

- Chinese first made paper in A.D. 105 from rags, tree bark, hemp fibers
  - before paper, books were made of expensive silk
- Inexpensive paper made books more available
  - Chinese valued learning; government kept many records

## Silk

- Silk is beautiful, long lasting, and can be dyed bright colors
- Silk's rarity made it an excellent trade product for Chinese
- Silk was traded for silver, gold from the west
  - at one point, a pound of silk was worth a pound of gold
  - China sought gold, silver because it lacked rich deposits of both

## REVIEW QUESTION

Why was it necessary to make improvements in farming methods in ancient China?

## Lesson Summary

- Trading routes called the Silk Roads brought goods and ideas to and from China.
- Confucianism and Daoism had a lasting influence in China.
- Chinese inventions in agriculture, paper making, and other discoveries improved daily life.

## Why It Matters Now . . .

Ancient cultural patterns continue to influence life in China and elsewhere.