

134 BC

124 BC

● Confucianism as the only official ideology

● Founding of Taixue



Portrait of Dong Zhongshu

● In 134 BC, Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC), a Western Han scholar and philosopher, proposed to Emperor Wu that "Confucianism be the only official ideology and all other schools of thought be banned." Absorbing Legalist, Daoist and Yin-Yang elements, Dong redefined Confucianism in the large concept of the "Universe," where "Heaven" is revered as the highest being controlling human fate and ethics is the reflection of heavenly will. In this highly mystified and politicalized version of Confucianism, the social and ethical codes of the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" were never to be violated. Dong's theory sanctified Confucianism and offered systematic answers to a series of philosophical, political and social questions of that time. As Confucianism helped promote the centralization of power, it gradually became the dominant ideology of China.

● In 124 BC, Emperor Wu of Han, adopting the advice of Dong Zhongshu, established a grand school to preach Confucianism. Regarded as the first university in Chinese history, Taixue exercised educational and administrative functions as the highest official school. Students mainly received education in Confucian classics, including *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*), *Shi Jing* (*Book of Odes*), *Shang Shu* (*Classic of History*), *Li Ji* (*Classic of Rites*), along with other Confucian writings. Those who mastered more than one classic text became qualified to fill any vacant official posts. To consolidate the status of Confucianism as the orthodox doctrine, teachings of Confucianism always remained the theme in the imperial university's history of development.

119 BC

118 BC

● Battle of Mobei, Generals Wei Qing and Huo Qubing



Portrait of Wei Qing

● Wei Qing (?-106 BC) and Huo Qubing (140-117 BC) were two great generals during the reign of Han Emperor Wu, whose campaigns against the Xiongnu earned them great acclaim. General Wei was noted for his seven successive campaigns, while General Huo was known for his two complete victories over the Xiongnu in 121 BC, taking control of the Hexi area (now Gansu) and opening the gateway to the Western Regions. In 119 BC, the two generals launched a joint attack on the Xiongnu, and eliminated the enemy at Mobei. The great victories of Wei and Huo drove the Xiongnu tribes out of Han China's territory, and also guaranteed the safety of the Silk Road.

● Five-zhu Coin

● In his fourth currency reform in 118 BC, Han Emperor Wu ordered the minting and circulation of five-*zhu* coins across the country. These coins were round in shape with square hollows in the center, weighing 5 *zhu* (~3.33 g). At first, private mintage was permitted, but soon resulted in currency chaos because of different standards in coinage. In 113 BC, the government imposed a monopoly on mintage, and set up a special institute to monitor coinage. In the following 700 years, five-*zhu* coins were produced in every dynasty, to become the currency with the longest period and largest volume of circulation in Chinese history.



A string of five-*zhu* coins

Iron mold for minting five-*zhu* coins

● Yuefu, Chinese folk lyric



Facsimile of Yuefu Poetry Collection

● Fully developed in the Han Dynasty, *yuefu* was a form of poetry using simple language that told stories of ordinary people. Literally meaning "music bureau," "*yuefu*" originally referred to the government institute in charge of collecting and composing melodies with lyrics that were sung. These lyric poems were thus called "*yuefu* poetry," and included folksongs, poems, and more often, ballads describing everyday life and the pursuit of freedom. Two representative *yuefu* poems were *Ballad of Mulan* and *The Peacock Flies Southeast*.

108 BC

104 BC

● Sima Qian and his Records of the Historian (108-91 BC)



Portrait of Sima Qian

● Sima Qian (145-90 BC), the most famed historian in Chinese history, was a native of Xiayang (now Hancheng, Shaanxi). In 108 BC, he was appointed by Han Emperor Wu as Prefect of the Grand Scribes, to compile a set of historical records of China, which became known as *Records of the Historian*. In 99 BC, Sima Qian was castrated and thrown into prison for offending the emperor. Upon his release, Sima Qian lived on to complete his work, around 91 BC. The 130 chapters of the text classified information into five categories: *Benji* (Basic Annals), *Shijia* (Hereditary Houses), *Liezhuo* (Memoirs), *Shu* (Essays), and *Biao* (Chronologies). Recounting the history of China, covering more than 2,000 years from the Yellow Emperor to Han Emperor Wu of his time, the grand historical and biographical work features skillful depiction and concise language in an innovative approach, which has served as a model in Chinese historiography.



Facsimile of *Records of the Historian*

● Taichu Calendar

● In the early years of the Western Han Dynasty, the inaccurate Qin calendar was still in use. In 104 BC, two astronomers Luoxia Hong and Deng Ping developed a new calendar: the Taichuli. The new calendar stated, there are 365.2502 days in a year, and 29.53086 days in a month. The first month of the year was changed from the 10th to the 1st lunar month. The "24 Solar Terms" were adopted to guide agricultural production. Based on careful research of past astronomical data, the compilers also summarized the solar eclipse periods at 135 months. As the first comprehensively collated calendar in ancient China, the Taichuli was also the most advanced among contemporary calendars in the world. The Taichu Calendar remained in use for 189 years.



© Roman statesman and philosopher M.T. Cicero (106-43 BC) originated a systematic account of "Natural Laws," and established the eclectic school of thought.

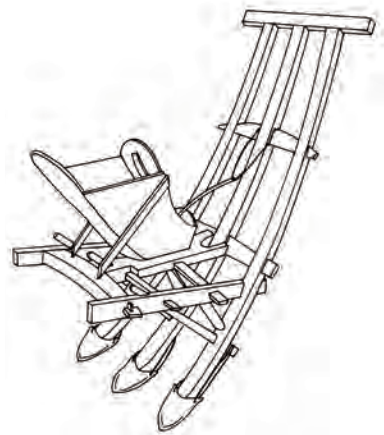
89 BC

Zhao Guo and his “furrow-ridge-rotating farming method”

During the rule of Emperor Wu, Zhao Guo (birth and death unknown), an official in charge of collecting grain for armies, invented a “furrow-ridge-rotating farming method” after studying dry farming conditions of northern China. In the new cultivation method, the fields were ploughed with alternating furrows and ridges. Seeds were sowed into the furrows thus being protected from wind and drought. Each year the soil was prepared, and the furrows and ridges were rotated to balance the soil fertility. After seedlings emerged, the soil was fallowed, and the ridges and furrows were made level with each other. Zhao also invented a series of new farm tools, including the *ouli* (plow guided by two men), *louli* (animal-pulled plow), and *louche* (plow combined with sowing device). Together with the newly invented farm tools, farming efficiency was greatly increased with the new tilling methods, where only one man was needed to guide the two-oxen-pulled plow.



Eastern Han stone relief of oxen-pulled plowing



Reproduced illustration of *Louche* plow

The *louche* was invented by a group of artisans under the leadership of Zhao Guo. Placed in a funnel connected to a tube below, seeds automatically dropped when the apparatus was shaken. *Louche* could plow even-spaced furrows, and then sow seeds in them. Because of its farming efficiency, sowing with *louche* became widely adopted in the Han Dynasty.

81 BC

54 BC

43 BC



● The Salt and Iron Conference

● In the Han Dynasty, high-ranking officials and politicians often gathered to discuss political and economic issues. In 81 BC, one such meeting debated the issues of salt and iron. The Legalists represented government officials, while the other side had local government representatives who upheld Confucianism. The debate centered on the state monopoly of salt and iron trade, government price-control measures, and measures against excessive profits of merchants. Issues of national defense, diplomatic relations, crime control, social stability, adopting harsh laws and adherence to moral education were also discussed.

● Grain storage further systemized



Brick relief with archers and reapers

● Grain storage was set up as a national treasury program in the Xia Dynasty. In 54 BC, Emperor Xuan (r. 73-49BC) of the Han Dynasty set up standard price granaries at border prefectures, and adopted a policy of purchasing grains when prices were low and selling when high. The storage system played a positive role in controlling the market, regulating prices, helping the poor during crop failures and preparing against wars. It became a basic system for all Chinese dynasties.

● Earliest records of black sunspots

● It is recorded in *History of Han Five Elements*: "In the 4th moon of the 1st year of the Yongguang Reign of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty... Black inclined on the side of the sun, big as a pellet." This referred to a black sunspot, as big as a pellet, in an inclining shape, on one side of the sun. The 1st year of the Yongguang reign was 43 BC. The same book also noted: "In the 3rd moon of the 1st year of the Heping Reign..., the sun was yellow, with Black big as a coin found in the center." This sunspot was recorded on May 10, 28 BC. Most scholars believe them to be the earliest records of sunspots in the world.

○ 73 -71 BC: Spartacus uprising in Rome.

○ c. 57 BC: The ancient state of Silla was founded in Korea