
First published in 1937. The Book of Songs is a collection of ancient Chinese songs, dating from 800 to 600 B.C. Until this was published in 1937 it had not been translated into English since the middle of nineteenth century, when sinology was still in its infancy. For the first time the original meaning of 290 out of the 305 songs is given, use being made of the advances in the study of old Chinese. The result is not merely a clear picture of early Chinese life, but also the restoration to its proper place in world literature of one of the finest collection of traditional songs.

‘Early China’ refers to the period from the beginning of human history in China to the end of the Han Dynasty in AD 220. The roots of modern Chinese society and culture are all to be found in this formative period of Chinese civilization. Li Feng's new critical interpretation draws on the most recent scholarship and archaeological discoveries from the past thirty years. This fluent and engaging overview of early Chinese civilization explores key topics including the origins of the written language, the rise of the state, the Shang and Zhou religions, bureaucracy, law and governance, the evolving nature of war, the creation of empire, the changing image of art, and the philosophical search for social order. Beautifully illustrated with a wide range of new images, this book is essential reading for all those wanting to know more about the foundations of Chinese history and civilization.

The Chinese Book of Songs (Shijing) is a collection of 305 poems dating from between 1000 and 600 B.C., and, thus, is one of the earliest literary works in any living language. It offers vignettes of life in an almost unimaginably remote society; many of the poems have great charm, for instance, some are authored by women about their love problems. (For such early literature it is remarkable how many poems are by women.) Over the centuries the content of the Odes has become obscured by developments in the Chinese language, by prudishness and pomposity on the part of commentators, and because earlier translators were often more interested in philological technicalities than in the poems' human significance. This book cuts through these obscurities to present a new translation of the Odes, into straightforward, down-to-earth English. The Odes are the earliest rhyming poetry in any language, and they make use of alliteration and assonance to achieve their poetic effects, but changes in the sounds of modern Chinese have destroyed all this speech-music. This book restores it: alongside the author's translations, it spells the Chinese wording out in the sounds used by the original poets—something which has only recently become possible through advances in the reconstruction of Old Chinese speech.

This book traces the evolving uses of writing to command assent and obedience in early China, an evolution that culminated in the establishment of a textual canon as the foundation of imperial authority. Its central theme is the emergence of this body of writings as the textual double of the state, and of the text-based sage as the double of the ruler. The book examines the full range of writings employed in early China, such as divinatory records, written communications with ancestors, government documents, the collective writings of philosophical and textual traditions, speeches attributed to historical figures, chronicles, verse anthologies, commentaries, and encyclopedic compendia. Lewis shows how these writings served to administer populations, control officials, form new social groups, invent new models of authority, and create an artificial language whose master generated power and whose graphs became potent objects.

Applies the 'life history' of objects approach to China's prehistoric, early dynastic and more recent material culture.

In This path breaking book Martin J. Powers examines the art and politics of Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) and show that both were shaped by the rise of an educated, non aristocratic public—the Confucian literati - that questioned the authority of the rich and royal at all levels. By considering the design and construction of local tombs and shrines, their mural schemes, subject matter, and style, the author distinguishes three major traditions of taste and places each tradition within a narrative of political rivalries in northeast China.

The Oxford Handbook on Early China brings 30 scholars together to cover early China from the Neolithic through Warring States periods (ca 5000-500BCE). The study is chronological and incorporates a multidisciplinary approach, covering topics from archaeology, anthropology, art history, architecture, music, and metallurgy, to literature, religion, paleography, cosmology, religion, prehistory, and history.

The study of early China has been radically transformed over the past fifty years by archaeological discoveries, including both textual and non-textual artefacts. Excavations of settlements and tombs have demonstrated that most people did not lead their lives in accordance with ritual canons, while previously unknown documents have shown that most received histories were written retrospectively by victors and present a correspondingly anachronistic perspective. This handbook provides an authoritative survey of the major periods of Chinese history from the Neolithic era to the fall of the Latter Han Empire and the end of antiquity (AD 220). It is the first volume to include not only a comprehensive review of political history but also detailed treatments of topics that transcend particular historical periods, such as: Warfare and political thought, Cities and agriculture, Language and art, Medicine and mathematics. Providing a detailed analysis of the most up-to-date research by leading scholars in the field of early Chinese history, this book will be useful to students and scholars of Chinese history, Asian archaeology, and Chinese studies in general.
For modern people, ghost stories are no more than thrilling entertainment. For those living in antiquity, ghosts were far more serious beings, as they could affect the life and death of people and cause endless fear and anxiety. How did ancient societies imagine what ghosts looked like, what they could do, and how people could deal with them? From the vantage point of modernity, what can we learn about an obscure, but no less important aspect of an ancient culture? In this volume, Mu-chou Poo explores the ghosts of ancient China, the ideas that they nurtured, and their role in its culture. His study provides fascinating insights into the interaction between the idea of ghosts and religious activities, literary imagination, and social life devoted to them. Comparing Chinese ghosts with those of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, Poo also offers a wider perspective on the role of ghosts in human history.

In this major new study, Mark Edward Lewis traces how the changing language of honor and shame helped to articulate and justify transformations in Chinese society between the Warring States and the end of the Han dynasty. Through careful examination of a wide variety of texts, he demonstrates how honor-shame discourse justified the actions of diverse and potentially rival groups. Over centuries, the formally recognized political order came to be intertwined with groups articulating alternative models of honor. These groups both participated in the existing order and, through their own visions of what was truly honorable, paved the way for subsequent political structures. Filling a major lacuna in the study of early China, Lewis presents ways in which the early Chinese empires can be fruitfully considered in comparative context and develops a more systematic understanding of the fundamental role of honor/shame in shaping states and societies.

This book examines the emergence of imperial state in East Asia during the period ca. 400 BCE–200 CE as a network-based process, showing how the geography of early interregional contacts south of the Yangzi River informed the directions of Sinitic state expansion. Drawing from an extensive collection of sources including transmitted textual records, archaeological evidence, excavated legal manuscripts, and archival documents from Liye, this book demonstrates the breadth of human and material resources available to the empire builders of an early imperial network throughout southern East Asia – from institutions and infrastructures, to the relationships that facilitated circulation. This network is shown to have been essential to the consolidation of Sinitic imperial rule in the sub-tropical zone south of the Yangzi against formidable environmental, epidemiological, and logistical odds. This is also the first study to explore how the interplay between an imperial network and alternative frameworks of long-distance interaction in ancient East Asia shaped the political-economic trajectory of the Sinitic world and its involvement in Eurasian globalization. Contributing to debates around imperial state formation, the applicability of world-system models and the comparative study of empires, The Imperial Network in Ancient China will be of significant interest to students and scholars of East Asian studies, archaeology and history.

Examine the development of the philosophy, culture, and civilization of ancient China and discusses the history of Taoism and Confucianism

In Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China, Anthony J. Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates offer the first detailed study and translation into English of two important early Chinese legal texts from the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).

Together, and for the first time in any language, the 24 essays gathered in these volumes provide a composite picture of the history of religion in ancient China from the emergence of writing ca. 1250 BC to the collapse of the first major imperial dynasty in 220 AD. It is a multi-faceted tale of changing gods and rituals that includes the emergence of a form of secular humanism that doubts the existence of the gods and the efficacy of ritual and of an imperial orthodoxy that founds its legitimacy on a distinction between licit and illicit sacrifices. Written by specialists in a variety of disciplines, the essays cover such subjects as divination and cosmology, exorcism and medicine, ethics and self-cultivation, mythology, taboos, sacrifice, shamanism, burial practices, iconography, and political philosophy. Produced under the aegis of the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations chinoise, japonaise et tibétaine (UMR 8155) and the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris).

Conventional wisdom has it that the concept of individualism was absent in early China. In this uncommon study of the self and human agency in ancient China, Erica Fox Brindley provides an important corrective to this view and persuasively argues that an idea of individualism can be applied to the study of early Chinese thought and politics with intriguing results. She introduces the development of ideological and religious beliefs that link universal, cosmic authority to the individual in ways that may be referred to individualistic and illustrates how these evolved alongside and potentially helped contribute to larger sociopolitical changes of the time, such as the centralization of political authority and the growth in the social mobility of the educated elite class. Starting with the writings of the early Mohists (fourth century BCE), Brindley analyzes many of the major works through the early second century BCE by Laozi, Mencius, Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi, as well as anonymous authors of both received and excavated texts. Changing notions of human agency affected prevailing attitudes toward the self as individual in particular, the onset of ideas that stressed the power and authority of the individual, either as a conformist agent in relation to a larger whole or as an individualistic agent endowed with inalienable cosmic powers and authorities. She goes on to show how distinctly internal (individualistic), external (institutionalized), or mixed (syncretic) approaches to self-cultivation and state control emerged in response to such ideals. In her exploration of the nature of early Chinese individualism and the various theories for and against it, she reveals the ways in which authors innovatively adapted new theories on individual power to the needs of the burgeoning imperial state. With clarity and force, Individualism in Early China illuminates the importance of the individual in Chinese culture. By focusing on what is unique about early Chinese thinking on this topic, it gives readers a means of understanding particular "Chinese" discussions of and respect for the self.

Reveals cultural paradigms and historical prejudices regarding the role of birthing and women in the reproduction of society. Using newly discovered and excavated texts, Constance A. Cook and Xinhuo Luo systematically explore material culture, inscriptions, transmitted texts, and genealogies from BCE China to reconstruct the role of women in social reproduction in the ancient Chinese world. Applying paleographical, linguistic, and historical analyses, Cook and Luo discuss fertility rituals, birthing experiences, divine conceptions, divine births, and the overall influence of gendered supernatural agencies on the experience and outcome of birth. They unpack a cultural paradigm in which birth is not only a philosophical symbol of eternal return and renewal but also an abiding religious and social focus for lineage continuity. They also suggest that some of the mythical founder heroes traditionally assumed to be male may in fact have had female identities. Students of ancient history, particularly Chinese history, will find this book an essential complement to traditional historical narratives, while the exploration of ancient religious texts, many unknown in the West, provides a unique perspective into the study of the formation of mythology and the role of birthing in early religion.

This book is a timely response to a rather urgent call to seek an updated methodology in rereading and reappraising early Chinese texts in light of newly discovered early writings. For a long time, the concept of
A critical new interpretation of the early history of Chinese civilization based on the most recent scholarship and archaeological discoveries.

"Early China" refers to the period from the beginning of human history in China to the end of the Han Dynasty in AD 220. The roots of modern Chinese society and culture are all to be found in this formative period of Chinese civilization. Li Feng's new critical interpretation draws on the most recent scholarship and archaeological discoveries from the past thirty years. This fluent and engaging overview of early Chinese civilization explores key topics including the origins of the written language, the rise of the state, the Shang and Zhou religions, bureaucracy, law and governance, the evolving nature of war, the creation of empire, the changing image of art, and the philosophical search for social order. Beautifully illustrated with a wide range of new images, this book is essential reading for all those wanting to know more about the foundations of Chinese history and civilization.

The ancient Chinese were profoundly influenced by the Sun, Moon and stars, making persistent efforts to mirror astral phenomena in shaping their civilization. In this pioneering text, David W. Pankenier introduces readers to a seriously understudied field, illustrating how astronomy shaped the culture of China from the very beginning and how it influenced areas as disparate as art, architecture, calendrical science, myth, technology, and political and military decision-making. As elsewhere in the ancient world, there was no positive distinction between astronomy and astrology in ancient China, and so astrology, or more precisely, astral omenology, is a principal focus of the book. Drawing on a broad range of sources, including archaeological discoveries, classical texts, inscriptions and paleography, this thought-provoking book documents the role of astronomical phenomena in the development of the 'Celestial Empire' from the late Neolithic through the late imperial period.

Looks at mourning practices during the Han dynasty to reassess whether filial piety was the overriding model for society and governance in early China.

A thought-provoking book on archaeology of power, knowledge, social memory, and the emergence of classical tradition in early China.

Exploring the cultural perception of animals in early Chinese thought, this careful reading of Warring States and Han dynasty writings analyzes how views of animals were linked to human self perception and investigates the role of the animal world in the conception of ideals of sagehood and socio-political authority. Roel Sterckx shows how perceptions of the animal world influenced early Chinese views of man's place among the living species and in the world at large. He argues that the classic Chinese perception of the world did not insist on clear categorical or ontological boundaries between animals, humans, and other creatures such as ghosts and spirits. Instead the animal realm was positioned as part of an organic whole and the mutual relationships among the living species - both as natural and cultural creatures - were characterized as contingent, continuous, and interdependent.

Early China is best known for the dazzling artifacts it has left behind. This book examines the social context in which these terracotta figures, gilt-bronze lamps, and other objects unearthed during archaeological excavations were created and the lives of the real individuals who made them. From workshops to marketplace to the court, Barbieri-Low explores these artisans' lives and careers from a variety of aspects and humanizes the remains of the past.

The emergence and spread of literacy in ancient human society an important topic for all who study the ancient world, and the development of written Chinese is of particular interest, as modern Chinese orthography preserves logographic principles shared by its most ancient forms, making it unique among all present-day writing systems. In the past three decades, the discovery of previously unknown texts dating to the third century BCE and earlier, as well as older versions of known texts, has revolutionized the study of early Chinese writing. The long-term continuity and stability of the Chinese written language allow for this detailed study of the role literacy played in early civilization. The contributors to Writing and Literacy in Early China inquire into modes of manuscript production, the purposes for which texts were produced, and the ways in which they were actually used. By carefully evaluating current evidence and offering groundbreaking new interpretations, the book illuminates the nature of literacy for scribes and readers.

This richly illustrated book provides a glimpse into the belief system and the material wealth of the social elite in pre-Imperial China through a close analysis of tomb contents and excavated bamboo texts.

This ook redefines the bureaucracy of Ancient Chinese society during the Western Zhou period. The analysis is based on inscriptions of royal edicts from the period carved into bronze vessels. The inscriptions clarify the political and social construction of the Western Zhou and the ways in which it exercised its authority.

Although they existed more than a millennium apart, the great civilizations of New Kingdom Egypt (ca. 1548-1086 BCE) and Han dynasty China (206 BCE-220 CE) shared intriguing similarities. Both were centered...
around major, flood-prone rivers—the Nile and the Yellow River—and established complex hydraulic systems to manage their power. Both spread their territories across vast empires that were controlled through warfare and diplomacy and underwent periods of radical reform led by charismatic rulers—the “heretic king” Akhenaten and the vilified reformer Wang Mang. Universal justice was dispensed through courts, and each empire was administered by bureaucracies staffed by highly trained scribes who held special status. Egypt and China each developed elaborate conceptions of an afterlife world and created games of fate that facilitated access to these realms. This groundbreaking volume offers an innovative comparison of these two civilizations. Through a combination of textual, art historical, and archaeological analyses, Ancient Egypt and Early China reveals shared structural traits of each civilization as well as distinctive features.

This book provides new insights into the creation of the Chinese empire by examining the changing forms of permitted violence—warfare, hunting, sacrifice, punishments, and vengeance. It analyzes the interlinked evolution of these violent practices to reveal changes in the nature of political authority, in the basic units of social organization, and in the fundamental commitments of the ruling elite. The work offers a new interpretation of the changes that underlay the transformation of the Chinese polity from a league of city states dominated by aristocratic lineages to a unified, territorial state controlled by a supreme autocrat and his agents. In addition, it shows how a new pattern of violence was rationalized and how the Chinese of the period incorporated their ideas about violence into the myths and proto-scientific theories that provided historical and natural prototypes for the imperial state.

After a long spell of chaos, the Qin and Han dynasties (221 BCE–200 CE) saw the unification of the Chinese Empire under a single ruler, government, and code of law. During this era, changing social and political institutions affected the ways people conceived of womanhood. New ideals were promulgated, and women's lives gradually altered to conform to them. And under the new political system, the rulers’ consorts and their families obtained powerful roles that allowed women unprecedented influence in the highest level of government. Recognized as the leading work in this field, this introductory survey offers the first sustained history of women in the early imperial era. Now in a revised edition that incorporates the latest scholarship and theoretical approaches, the book draws on extensive primary and secondary sources in Chinese and Japanese to paint a remarkably detailed picture of the distant past. Bret Hinsch’s introductory chapters orient the nonspecialist to early imperial Chinese society; subsequent chapters discuss women's roles from the multiple perspectives of kinship, wealth and work, law, government, learning, ritual, and cosmology. An enhanced array of line drawings, a Chinese-character glossary, and extensive notes and bibliography enhance the author's discussion. Historians and students of gender and early China alike will find this book an invaluable overview.

This book provides a conceptual history of the emergence of civilizational consciousness in early China. Focusing on how words are used in pre-Qin (before 221 BCE) texts to construct identities and negotiate relationships between a 'civilised self' and 'uncivilised others', it provides a re-examination of the origins and development of these ideas. By adopting a novel approach to determining when civilizational consciousness emerged in pre-Qin China, this book analyzes this question in ways that establish a fresh hermeneutical dialogue between Chinese and modern European understandings of 'civilization.' Whereas previous studies have used archaeological data to place its origin somewhere between 3000 BCE and 1000 BCE, this book explores changes in word meanings in texts from the pre-Qin period to reject this view. Instead, this book dates the emergence of civilizational consciousness in China to around 2,500 years ago. In the process, new chronologies of the coinng of Old Chinese terms such as ‘customs,’ ‘barbarians,’ and ‘the Great ones’ are proposed, which challenge anachronistic assumptions about these terms in earlier studies. Examining important Chinese classics, such as the Analects, the Mencius and the Mòzi, as well as key historical periods and figures in the context of the concept of civilization, this book will be useful to students and scholars of Chinese and Asian history.

In Text and Ritual in Early China, leading scholars of ancient Chinese history, literature, religion, and archaeology consider the presence and use of texts in religious and political ritual. Through balanced attention to both the received literary tradition and the wide range of recently excavated artifacts, manuscripts, and inscriptions, their combined efforts reveal the rich and multilayered interplay of textual composition and ritual performance. Drawn across disciplinary boundaries, the resulting picture illuminates two of the defining features of early Chinese culture and advances new insights into their cryptic complexity. Beginning with a substantial introduction to the conceptual and thematic issues explored in succeeding chapters, Text and Ritual in Early China connects the modern reader to early imperial Chinese society. The essays here consider the presence and use of texts in both religious and political ritual. Throughout this volume, the editors and authors reveal the rich and multilayered interplay of textual composition and ritual performance. The essays here consider the presence and use of texts in both religious and political ritual. Throughout this volume, the editors and authors reveal the rich and multilayered interplay of textual composition and ritual performance. The essays here consider the presence and use of texts in both religious and political ritual. Throughout this volume, the editors and authors reveal the rich and multilayered interplay of textual composition and ritual performance. The essays here consider the presence and use of texts in both religious and political ritual. Throughout this volume, the editors and authors reveal the rich and multilayered interplay of textual composition and ritual performance. The essays here consider the presence and use of texts in both religious and political ritual. 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Access Free Early China A Social And Cultural History New Approaches To Asian History

central theme is the emergence of this body of writings as the textual double of the state, and of the text-based sage as the double of the ruler. The book examines the full range of writings employed in early China, such as divinatory records, written communications with ancestors, government documents, the collective writings of philosophical and textual traditions, speeches attributed to historical figures, chronicles, verse anthologies, commentaries, and encyclopedic compendia. Lewis shows how these writings served to administer populations, control officials, form new social groups, invent new models of authority, and create an artificial language whose master generated power and whose graphs became potent objects.

Ancestral ritual in early China was an orchestrated dance between what was present (the offerings and the living) and what was absent (the ancestors). The interconnections among the tangible elements of the sacrifice were overt and almost mechanical, but extending those connections to the invisible guests required a medium that was itself invisible. Thus in early China, ancestral sacrifice was associated with focused thinking about the ancestors, with a structured mental effort by the living to reach out to the absent forebears and to give them shape and existence. Thinking about the ancestors: about those who had become distant: required active deliberation and meditation, qualities that had to be nurtured and learned. This study is a history of the early Chinese ancestral cult, particularly its cognitive aspects. Its goals are to excavate the cult’s color and vitality and to quell assumptions that it was no more than a simplistic and uninspired exchange of food for longevity, of prayers for prosperity. Ancestor worship was not, the author contends, merely mechanical and thoughtless. Rather, it was an idea system that aroused serious debates about the nature of postmortem existence, served as the religious backbone to Confucianism, and may even have been the forerunner of Daoist and Buddhist meditation practices.

A leading scholar in the United States on Chinese archaeology challenges long-standing conceptions of the rise of political authority in ancient China. Questioning Marx’s concept of an “Asiatic” mode of production, Wittfogel’s “hydraulic hypothesis,” and cultural-materialist theories on the importance of technology, K. C. Chang builds an impressive counterargument, one which ranges widely from recent archaeological discoveries to studies of mythology, ancient Chinese poetry, and the iconography of Shang food vessels.

In 221 bc the First Emperor of Qin unified the lands that would become the heart of a Chinese empire. Though forged by conquest, this vast domain depended for its political survival on a fundamental reshaping of Chinese culture. With this informative book, we are present at the creation of an ancient imperial order whose major features would endure for two millennia. The Qin and Han constitute the “classical period” of Chinese history—a role played by the Greeks and Romans in the West. Mark Edward Lewis highlights the key challenges faced by the court officials and scholars who set about governing an empire of such scale and diversity of peoples. He traces the drastic measures taken to transcend, without eliminating, these regional differences: the invention of the emperor as the divine embodiment of the state; the establishment of a common script for communication and a state-sponsored canon for the propagation of Confucian ideals; the flourishing of the great families, whose domination of local society rested on wealth, landholding, and elaborate kinship structures; the demilitarization of the interior; and the impact of non-Chinese warrior-nomads in setting the boundaries of an emerging Chinese identity. The first of a six-volume series on the history of imperial China, The Early Chinese Empires illuminates many formative events in China’s long history of imperialism—events whose residual influence can still be discerned today.

Ancient China: A History surveys the East Asian Heartland Region—the geographical area that eventually became known as China—from the Neolithic period through the Bronze Age, to the early imperial era of Qin and Han, up to the threshold of the medieval period in the third century CE. For most of that long span of time there was no such place as “China”; the vast and varied territory of the Heartland Region was home to many diverse cultures that only slowly coalesced, culturally, linguistically, and politically, to form the first recognizably Chinese empires. The field of Early China Studies is being revolutionized in our time by a wealth of archaeologically recovered texts and artefacts. Major and Cook draw on this exciting new evidence and a rich harvest of contemporary scholarship to present a leading-edge account of ancient China and its antecedents. With handy pedagogical features such as maps and illustrations, as well as an extensive list of recommendations for further reading, Ancient China: A History is an important resource for undergraduate and postgraduate courses on Chinese History, and those studying Chinese Culture and Society more generally.