

[SQUEAKING]

[RUSTLING]

[CLICKING]

TRISTAN I want to begin today-- let me see if this works-- oh, it kind of does. Yeah, OK, no, but I have to do the full screen.

BROWN: Let me just not do it right now. But I want to show you just something really quick at the beginning of class today. When you were looking at your primary sources and you were looking at some of the oracle bones, did you notice something about dates? Tell me about the dates. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: I assumed it was like stuff with, the lunar calendar, these, like [INAUDIBLE] and whatever. They didn't really have a-- yeah, they just had like names for each day, but possibly the lunar cycles.

TRISTAN OK, you're on the right track. Yeah.

BROWN:

AUDIENCE: I thought the reading mentioned, there was a 60 days.

TRISTAN Yeah, so there's a 60-day cycle. And it's made up of the heavenly-- the earthly branches and the heavenly stems,
BROWN: [Chinese] tian gan di zhi, OK, 12 earthly branches, 10 heavenly stems, I believe. This is a really, really old system. And this-- let me see. Hopefully this plays. She's going to explain it for you.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- The system matches one stem with one branch. And every stem and branch has an attribute of either yin or yang. And the odd characters are yang. And all the even characters are yin. A yang stem can only match with a yang branch. And a yin stem only match with a yin branch. So after jiazi, we go to the second stem, yichou, and then bingyin, and so on and so forth, until the last stem, guiyou.

And we repeat the 10 stems, and we get jiaxu and yihai. And now, we repeat the 12 branches. So next is bingzi. And you get the idea. When the stems have been repeated five times, it goes back to jiazi. And that completes a cycle of a total of 60 character combinations.

[END PLAYBACK]

TRISTAN So basically, this is the foundation of time-telling in ancient China. And you can see that it goes really, really back
BROWN: to basically some of the earliest, the earliest written records we have. So when you look at the dates and they say, for instance, what did we have just right here, if we looked back here? The [Chinese] gui si day, for instance, or the [Chinese] ren yin day, that's going to be these branch/stem combinations.

So you know there's the 12 earthly branches, 10 heavenly stems. And I think what is it called? The lowest common multiplier is 60. So you get 60 combinations right of that with the evens with the evens and the odds with the odds.

I thought I would just show you this really briefly. Has anybody encountered a Chinese calendar? If you've gone to a Chinese restaurant, there's probably one hanging on the wall. You might have encountered it somewhere. This is from my phone. You can download one.

So just realize, the Chinese calendar is a fascinating topic. We're going to encounter it again, and again, and again, because historical documents are not written on the basis of the birth of Christ. They're written in a different system.

So if you have familiarity with the Jewish calendar, or the Islamic calendar, other alternative calendars, the Chinese calendar is kind of a little bit in that vein. It's a lunisolar calendar. It's often called the lunar calendar, but it is technically called-- I think, officially termed a lunisolar calendar because there are solar terms in it.

Just so you know, this is today. So this is the 11th of September. So that's our ninth month in this-- what is it-- what's the name of our-- Justinian? Gregorian. We're using Gregorian. OK, thank you very much. So basically, it's the eighth month in the ninth day of the eighth month in the Chinese calendar. So it's not the ninth month. So this is like, you got to convert it.

All right, this stuff kind of matters. And what I was going to point out to you. Yesterday, by the way, was Teacher's Day, no pressure. OK, no pressure. All my colleagues in China got all these messages. Happy Teacher's Day. No, no, no, it's OK. It's OK. I understand.

So of course, and they've kind of updated the calendar a little bit. So it also incorporates like Western Zodiac signs. So you have over here, we're in the Virgo season now. This is, again, not traditional. But they added in. They put in everything, right? Virgo, so you can see over here, the [Chinese] jia chen nian, that's exactly this stem, branch combination.

So there's a year. There's a 60-year cycle. So you go through the 60 years, and then the cycle starts over. You've probably encountered this if you've taken Modern China with me, the Xinhai revolution. The Xinhai Revolution, what year was that?

AUDIENCE: 1911.

TRISTAN 1911. And that's because 1911 was the Xinhai year in the Chinese calendar. That's an earth/branch combination.

BROWN: So you're going to see this again and again. It's a way to count the years. It's a way to count the months. It's a way to count the days. Every segment of time can be broken down in this 60 category.

And I was going to basically tell you, the Chinese calendar is loaded with stuff. So it also is loaded with things that you should do on a certain day and things you shouldn't do on a certain day. It gives you advice. It's much, much more extensive than just our, oh, it's Tuesday, or whatever day it is. Or Wednesday, whatever-- today's Wednesday.

So today, it's a good day to break some ground, to maybe start a construction project, or to have a burial. If you need to have a burial, you could do that today. Maybe do some cleaning, that's a good day. That's a good day.

But don't get married today. So if you're planning on getting married today, just cancel it. So no, no, no marriages today. So this is the kind of thing. Calendar gives you all this advice. This goes back, you can think about, when we look at the oracle bones and we look at these divinatory inscriptions, and these day combinations, the way they tell the time, this is very old.

But you see the remnants. You see the legacies of it in China today. And I was just going to show you over here, this is an example of one of these calendars from the Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China. That's the second month of the lunar year.

And then the month will have its 60-day identification. And this is a list of all the things you should and shouldn't do every day of that month. OK, so it's a really, really interesting topic.

All right, so getting back to what we're going to talk about today. Today, we're of course we're going to talk about the Western Zhou. Very good, we're going to talk about the end of the Shang dynasty, the foundation of the Western Zhou. And it's going to set us up for a very interesting week next week, where we get into next week, we're going to get into basically the decline of the Zhou political order and the rise of the Warring States. And I think we end with Confucius next week.

So this time next week, I think we're already at Confucius, so we're about there. But for now, today, we're going to do this. So here's the plan for today. Where's my plan? OK, we're going to finish writing. And don't worry, you don't have to write anything. I mean the study of writing. So we're going to continue looking at the writing systems.

We'll look at the Western Zhou and the Mandate of Heaven. This is of course, a really famous concept. I'm sure you've heard about it when people talk about China and all this stuff like that. The Mandate of Heaven, quote unquote, Tianming, is this kind of ideology that is dated to the Zhou project of conquering the Shang dynasty.

The structure, we'll look at the structure of the Zhou state and this question of feudalism. What is feudalism? Is it an appropriate term to use to describe the Zhou polity? We'll take a look at that. And by the way, the answer is no. So just letting you know that.

And then we'll look at a few classics. Of course, since we've already countered or started to look at the rise of writing, we're going to get some of the earliest important texts from early China. And we'll take a look at those today.

So first, let's look at characters, the evolution of the Chinese characters. I think I kind of left off on Monday with this. And you can basically see, the characters went through, from the time that they appeared on the oracle bone inscriptions, over the next 1,000 years, went through a series of developments.

So there were competing, actually, ways of writing the characters that you will find on bronze inscriptions, for instance, other kinds of texts. Remember, just a quick thing, paper has not been invented yet. So nothing is written on paper.

We will get to the invention of paper, approximately, it's dated to the Han dynasty, so give or take around the year 0 in the Gregorian calendar. But for the pre-paper era, we're seeing writing on, of course, oracle bone type of inscriptions. We're seeing them especially on bronzes. And we're seeing them on bamboo strips. So you do see these excavated bamboo strips. Those are some of the earliest books and texts that we have.

So you can see these various kinds of characters. Anybody who's studied Chinese or is learning Chinese? Do you recognize any of these? Look familiar?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

TRISTAN They look-- you kind of see what's going on. So what do you notice? What is it? What do they look like in the
BROWN: earliest version of them and then in the later version of them?

AUDIENCE: This version looks like they are just drawing lines to represent the actual objects they're referring to.

TRISTAN Right, and then you think as time goes on, it kind of becomes more abstract. Yeah, a little bit. A little bit. It's
BROWN: interesting how when you think about you look at the history of those writing systems, it's like I was saying with cuneiform, the earliest kind of writing we have in that Near East-- in the Near East is probably words for nouns to describe what's in this jar.

And then as it goes on, those nouns can be mobilized in a certain way as verbs. And the writing system can become more and more complex. I'll show you how that happened in China in just a second. But for those of you who are-- if you're learning Chinese, it's OK if you're not. But if you're learning Chinese, those are the contemporary equivalents of it.

And this would be the traditional on this line. And on the bottom line would be the simplified. So it's kind of interesting to look when you encounter a character, to trace its history and look back in time. Now, you will probably say, let me go here for a second, take a look at an original oracle bone inscription-- inscribed oracle bone with some writing on it.

You look at that and you say, do you recognize any of those characters? Is it easy to read? You recognize zhong? Yeah, that's the one. That's pretty good. You got zhong. So zhong actually has a pretty interesting consistency across time. That's the history of the character zhong over about 3,000 years.

OK, so you can pretty much see, at the top left, how it appears on the oracle bone inscription, approximately. It's that it looks like a rectangle with a straight line going through it. And there were some variants. There were some variants in the early years. So you could basically see, that top line are all variants of the character zhong, which means "center."

And literally, it looks like a center. You draw a rectangle and put a line in the middle, right? And then it's by the time you get to this, let's say second line, it's pretty much standardized. And you can see, there's some various-- how it might appear in certain scripts, almost calligraphic scripts, and then all the way down to, for instance, these are zhongs from the late Empire.

So it's pretty recognizable. It's pretty like, OK, I can see where that is. So you could imagine that in that turn of the 20th century, as people started to take oracle bones as academic subjects, they picked out a few characters and said, I think I know what that is.

Some of them looked very, very different. But you start with the ones you knew, and then they could gradually reconstruct the other ones. So we'll take a look, let's just show you how characters came into being across time in China.

This character is pronounced in contemporary Chinese, modern Mandarin, as dai. So it's typically a verb. It's used in a bunch of ways. But we can use this character to create a whole bunch of other characters. So if I take this character dai and I add another character for black on the bottom of it, I can create a new character.

And it basically means this is some of black color. It might be some of makeup that was used right over the centuries. Sometimes it's glossed as coal under the eyes, if you know what I'm talking about.

If I take the same character, dai, and I put cowrie shell underneath, what do we get? Like alone, like alone. So one of the things that you're seeing here, this is really fascinating for the development of the Chinese writing system, is a combination of semantic meaning and phonetic meaning, these two things kind of coming together.

So you have a character that means replace or substitute. And it's pronounced dai. Now this character up here that means something like a black color, what does it have to do with replace or substitute? It doesn't. But it's pronounced-- it was pronounced, in the very early period, like this character. So they said, let's use this character as a pronunciation.

But then we add, the hei, the black, that's what it actually means. You get what I'm saying here? It's this combination. The reason why I'm pointing this out to you is that actually, while this kind of looks like-- when you first start looking at the Chinese writing system, and you're like oh, it's pictographic.

That's what people said about hieroglyphs in Egypt. They said, oh, look, it's pictographic. Look, there are crocodiles everywhere. But no, they were not just writing about crocodiles. They're not just writing about that. It's that the character, let's say, for crocodile, had a pronunciation. And it was shared that pronunciation with other things. So you would bring it in sometimes for phonetic purposes. Chinese worked the same.

OK, Mayan actually worked the same. So this is actually something that is shared. This gets into this question, it's kind of you could think about of is this an ex nihilo creation? Or was writing as a technology known and then brought into China? Something to think about.

And similarly with here, to loan something to someone, right? So just looking at some examples here. All right, let's look at two more. We have this-- this is, of course, a very famous combination. I just thought I'd put it out here.

So this character up at the top appears on oracle bone inscriptions. Doesn't look like something you recognize a lot. But it's composed-- it's a composite of two separate characters. Did anybody recognize it? [Chinese] It's hao. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, it is. [Chinese] It's hao. So this is it's composed of two separate characters, [Chinese] it's hao(3), or [Chinese] it's hao(4). It's two pronunciations possible.

And so you could basically see how they combined it. This, on your right, is the character for "woman." This on your left is the character for "child." You put woman and child together, and initially, it means to like or to love.

So these are two nouns you put together and you get a verb. And that's how they express this verb. Now, it also, over time, came to mean something like good. It's just like a good person, a good idea, all of that type of stuff like that.

So you can see, this is how you go from the original 700, 800 original characters that were created during the reign of King Wu Ding to getting thousands of characters that can express any thoughts, that complete writing system. OK, all right, so there you go. That's its historical development.

All right, so we're going to go to discussion in just a second, but I wanted to just give some thoughts here. What do these oracle bones tell us about Shang society, for those of you who read them, right? The royal house engaged in ancestor worship. But why did it engage in ancestor worship? Why do you think it was so important that they did that?

OK, I think the basic answer, of course, is the legitimation of the royal line, the King of the Shang has ancestors, and he talks to them. They were the king. And because he talks to them, he's the king. That's a big part of it.

Divination, the king could access information from heaven. He's also responsible for that. There's also, you might have encountered this in the oracle bone inscriptions, this kind of deity called Di. This is a really, really fascinating character because we're going to encounter it again.

It's the Huangdi, the Di, the second character in the word that becomes emperor. And the earliest appearance of it, it was a very, very high God in the Shang pantheon. He was not an ancestor. He was something else. But he was very, very powerful. So you could see this. Wu Ding and after, these kind of questions, let me just pause here for a second.

I just want to raise one thing to you. If you look, there's the line of the 30 Shang Kings. You know that during the reign of Wu Ding, OK, K21 right there, that's when the writing suddenly appears. So we don't have anything from before then. It suddenly appears at that time. Then we have writing for the rest of it.

If you look at the two final kings, their posthumous names have this character Di in it. That's very, very intriguing. Why did they take this character for the high God in their actual posthumous royal name? That's something that people debate about.

One really quick point before moving on, just realize on this writing thing, there were other cultures around the Shang state that were sophisticated, that had organization, that made, for instance, huge bronze vessels and objects, but did not have writing.

So Sanxingdui, for instance, is probably the most famous example of this. It was found in Sichuan. This is a culture and a society, certainly there was a kind of state here located in Sichuan. You can see it's kind of far away from the center of the Shang dynasty, the Shang royal lands.

But they did make bronzes. So they had the bronze technology. But they didn't have the writing technology. That's really intriguing, because you might think, isn't writing easy to transmit? Wouldn't that be transmitted rather than the bronze? Just realize, bronzes started to be made centuries actually before the appearance of writing in China. So this is kind of intriguing for what you have about that.

All right, let's take a look-- I want to do-- I want to take a look at some of your discussion posts. Should I do a summary? Do you want a summary? Maybe a summary up to now? Let me do a quick summary up to now. Then we're all on the same page. And then we talk about it.

Key takeaways so far, OK, look, agricultural communities in China can trace back to about 6,000, 7,000 BCE. There's a debate. Some would even put it at 8,000 BCE, before the Common Era. A number of cultures evolved during the Neolithic.

We looked at, for instance, the various kinds of pottery, the black polished pottery, the Longshan culture, and all of that. They might have competed against each other. There was certainly a diversity there. Systematic writing was invented in the late Shang, around 1,200 BCE, which not only had bronze technology, but also walled cities and complex state structure.

And then the point that I was kind of raising at the beginning of class on Monday, although classical understandings of early history were often mythical, archeologists have shown that some elements were, indeed, rooted in truth.

So this kind of, again, I think the story of early China is a lot like biblical history. During the 20th century, there was this kind of fashion of saying, oh, it's all a myth. All that stuff, whatever, is all a myth. Similar in China, there was a reaction against the tradition, and they say it's all a myth.

Now, we go back and we say no, some things seem to actually be real. We saw that [INAUDIBLE] state, maybe it's the [INAUDIBLE], that kind of thing. Also, Yu the Great, another thing, the guy who controls the floods, his story can be dated quite early.

All right, the writing system that evolved in the late Shang is, with some changes, the ones still in use today. That's kind of remarkable. OK, I think now I have-- let's talk about the discussion. Finally, we get to your posts this week. What did you think? What did you think? What did you think? I think one of the questions that you engaged with this week was the writing system of Chinese characters. What do you think the pros and cons of this technology are? Anybody want to take a stab at it? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: It's a very-- it's a very memorization heavy system in order to learn. I think a lot of Chinese teaching emphasizes memorization. I think comes from the fact that this language is memorization is necessary in a way that alphabets do not necessarily need as much in order to reach a certain level of literacy.

TRISTAN BROWN: So the learning curve is higher. It takes longer to do it. Yeah, no, I get it. So is that a good thing or a bad thing?

AUDIENCE: I think there may be some-- I definitely think-- I know throughout various histories, the Chinese language being this way has actually affected certain things, where you can make knowledge exclusive to the nobility, and learning and language exclusive to a certain group of people, and inaccessible. And it depends, I think, on the time period, whether you wanted literacy to be accessible to the common people.

TRISTAN BROWN: It's an interesting question here. I mean, well, in order to interrogate that question, though, we'd have to ask, what were the literacy rates in Shakespeare's England? And I'm not sure they were very high, I mean, to be honest.

And although it is true, alphabets are relatively easier to learn, to be honest with you, the Latin alphabet, I struggled with it. The way that we write, think about how we use-- first of all, we didn't create our own alphabet, English speakers.

Korean speakers, Koreans invented a writing system for their language. So it's perfect. Our writing system, this Latin alphabet, was created for a language we don't speak. We're not even that closely related to that language, frankly.

That's why, for instance, we have "through," you walk through something. And then I threw the ball. Those are pronounced the same. But they're written differently. That doesn't make any sense. That actually, when you're reading, when you're learning English, you actually have to tell the learner, no, there's all these strange exceptions, sorry. It doesn't make any sense. This technology wasn't made for the software, sorry. You know what I mean? Like, it's actually true. Can you think of other examples in English?

AUDIENCE: Hiccup?

TRISTAN Hiccup? So tell me about hiccup?

BROWN:

AUDIENCE: Or that thing where it's like words that end in O-U-G-H.

TRISTAN You're right, yeah, it's a killer. It's a killer. O-U-G-H is a killer. And we have a bunch because English is such an

BROWN: interesting language because it's Germanic. But it has all this French influence from the Norman conquest of the British-- of England.

So it's got all these different words in it, deriving from originally different languages. And they have different spellings, of course. But I think it's just important to remember, it's not that easy to learn. Now, characters are hard to learn. I'm not going to deny that. But for other people who wrote about the discussion posts this week, what did you think? What are some of the pros? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] mentioned was that given that there's many dialects in China, it's like the same-- you can read it, you can communicate [INAUDIBLE] language.

TRISTAN Exactly. No, you're absolutely right, that Chinese, in a way, how you pronounce the character was kind of yo,
BROWN: Cantonese pronounced it one way, northerners pronounce it another way, but they can both read the same text. So that works in certain ways.

In a way, you can think about it of Latin, in much of Europe prior to the 20th century, kind of posed a similar type of system. It's like, well, I speak French, and you speak Italian, and you speak German, but we all know Latin. So when they're picking a new Pope, they'll just talk in Latin, because that's what they all know. So that's kind of like what Chinese characters, yes, they can-- it's less on the pronunciation.

AUDIENCE: I think another benefit of Chinese characters is that I think they're more information dense than the Latin alphabet. So you can pack more information onto the page. And if you look at Latin manuscripts, for example, oftentimes, you'll see-- or in Greek manuscripts, they'll use these abbreviations that are basically functioning the same way as Chinese characters because they don't want to write out the whole word, like for common words like "and," trying to simulate that.

TRISTAN No, you're absolutely right. It's true. And I know this because my book is being translated into Chinese. And so
BROWN: when you see the Chinese version, you're like, it looks shorter. And I'm like-- I wrote a 400 page book. I want a 400 page book.

And it's like, this looks 200 pages. But it's information dense. So you actually, it requires fewer characters to say, think about it, you have to spell out "that," T-H-A-T, four characters. But in Chinese, it's one character. What else? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: I guess like I think what's annoyed me, when you're trying to do like science stuff, is eventually if you use Latin and Greek, eventually, you run out of characters to use. In Chinese, you can invent one and then just say, this means that.

TRISTAN It's true.

BROWN:

AUDIENCE: You don't really have you don't have the issue of running out.

TRISTAN That's true, that's true, that's true. Yeah, you're absolutely right. You never run out of characters in Chinese. Or

BROWN: at least I've never run out. And yes, it's true. And the other point that you raise is new characters coming into existence over the centuries. That's a fascinating topic, even now in the internet age, the creation of new kind of fun characters is kind of an ongoing thing. That's like that emoji question. We'll get to it in a second. Anybody else? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: I also think like with a new character that you don't know, usually you can both guess the meaning and the pronunciation.

TRISTAN So this is kind of getting back to that the black color example I gave. It's also getting back to the lone example I gave. When you're reading a text and I see a character I don't know, you basically-- you fake it till you make it.

BROWN:

So the way you fake it till you make it is you look at the character and say, within this character, are there any characters I know how to pronounce? And you're like, maybe that's pronounced dai, but I'm not sure. But it's like it's like, and in, let's say, 60% of the time, you'll be right. You know what I mean? It kind of works. But it doesn't always work. That's the thing. It doesn't always work.

But yeah, it's true. The characters, because they're information dense, they give you a lot of information. Once you learn them, they give-- you look at a text, and you get a lot of information from them in a way that you don't get from the alphabet. Were you going to say something?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I think previously we discussed for example, with dialects, even also even with Japanese people who know a lot of kanji, you can communicate through writing, but also you can communicate through time, we can read Han dynasty text, and essentially it's the same thing.

People who study calligraphy imitate [INAUDIBLE] lived during the Tang dynasty. And so there's a cultural continuity that exists, where you can look at this and say, maybe if I like-- if you dropped a Chinese person from modern China into the Tang dynasty, maybe they wouldn't be able to understand anyone.

Well, maybe if they were in a region whose dialect is more similar to the official dialect, they could communicate verbally. But if you were like, I don't know, northerner, you probably couldn't communicate with anyone. But you could communicate with them through writing. And you would know the famous poets and whatnot. So there's a sense of cultural continuity that I think you get less so-- I don't think that a lot of people in like England have a really strong connection to [INAUDIBLE]. That's part of the problem.

TRISTAN
BROWN: Yeah, OK, Interesting point. I like the point. The perception of cultural continuity through the writing system certainly is powerful. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: Building off of that a little bit, correct me if I'm mistaken, but I believe that there was some form of literary diplomacy in East Asia pre the modern period, where you had a lot of countries or a lot of groups of people who existed in the Sinosphere paying tribute to whatever Chinese dynasty was in power. And their diplomats would get together. And they would not speak the same language, but they would be [INAUDIBLE].

TRISTAN
BROWN: No, you're absolutely right. So that's certainly the case with Korea, Japan, Vietnam, the big places that use the Chinese characters. And also to a certain extent, for instance, borrowed from the calendar that we just talked about, Japan is kind of a unique case there a little bit.

But certainly absolutely in the East Asia, it's not Sinophone, but what do they call? Sinographic sphere, it does give that communication. It also poses to us, I think it's an important thing, for instance, in Korea, there was a move away from Chinese characters in the early 20th century, in the 20th century. And what do you gain from that? And what do you lose from that? That's actually a really interesting question about memory, about identity, and all of that. So yeah?

AUDIENCE: I'm just like-- I'm not sure if what people were discussing is actually [INAUDIBLE] to the inherent structure of the language, or is a result of the cultural and historical situations surrounding it. Because China could have essentially become like Europe did after the fall of Rome and stayed almost as separate entities and stayed broken up.

And I think if China does something like that, wouldn't the language divergence be so wide that, like you mentioned, the characters do evolve through time. And it's not like the consistency is as miraculous as like an alphabetic language. It's like a question, is it the inherent structure of the language has facilitated this, or is it just weird circumstances prescribing that to a culture that hasn't been able to maintain some of cohesion through time?

TRISTAN
BROWN: Yeah well, it's a great, great question. We're going to get to-- over the next few weeks, so we're going to look at those centuries of like why, of course, does the Empire of China keep coming back together? It's a great, great question to think about. Was there one hand in the back maybe before moving on? Does somebody want to jump in? Was there anybody back there? You good? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: I just wanted to add to-- it does seem to me that having an alphabetical system, which is like, OK, 26 characters, you just use that over and over again, that should change less than tiny characters with--

TRISTAN
BROWN: The letters themselves or words? Yeah, OK. Well, I mean, if you look, if you go and you look at the Pantheon in Central Rome, and you see, what's that guy? Agrippa on the-- his name is written on the top of it, you recognize all those letters. It's just like, what does it mean? You know what I mean? That's the thing. Yeah, OK?

AUDIENCE: I mean, I guess that's one of the things like languages that are like English that are based on phonetics, where everyone interprets the phonetics differently. So if the words were pronounced differently, then the spelling is different. And so even within English itself, it's not that consistent. If you go back 300 years, it's kind of difficult to do [INAUDIBLE] same alphabet, because they spelled things differently.

TRISTAN
BROWN: Because they spoke differently. This is the thing of like what really changes. The way we speak changes really, really quickly. And that's true in China. That's true-- I mean, I was saying this in the other class yesterday. If you pick up Shakespeare in the original, you might be able to get through like a page. But it's not beach reading.

There's a lot of jokes, there's a lot of words. There's a lot of vocabulary stuff that you totally need glossed, even as an educated person. You got to be like, what is he saying there? And that's just a product of how the English language has changed over the last four centuries.

So the Chinese language, and just to be precise here, the language changes all the time. But the script is more conservative. It changes less. And so that's like an alphabetic system. All right, one thing I was just going to say, I'm going to pass over that for a second.

But I wanted to get I think, really, back to this point that was actually just raised here about when we talk in this class about Chinese history, and I give you we're doing dynastic China, this is the perfect place to just stop and ask, what is "China"?

It's remember, it's not a racial group. There are many different people who live in China, who you couldn't classify in one way. It's a super diverse place. You can't even classify it by one food. Do Chinese people eat rice? Do they eat noodles? Do they eat this? Do they eat that? They eat a lot of things. And it just depends on where you are.

And so we, of course, I always say this, when we're outside, we go Chinese food. But when you're in China, nobody says Chinese food. That doesn't even make sense. It's food. You know what I mean? You don't need-- you don't need the adjective there. It's food. It changes all the time. Chinese dress has changed all the time.

Certainly, you can see this in the dynasties. A dynasty, for instance, Qing dynasty dress looks so dramatically different than the dynasty that preceded it, Ming dynasty dress. It's like scandalous, actually. If you really-- it looks, when you say, again, we're sitting in the 21st century, oh, it looks like ancient China. No, no, look at the hats. Look at the hair. It's different. It's all different. It matters.

China's borders have constantly changed. Chinese ethnicities and languages have constantly changed. There is no eternal China defined by those things. But I think that what you can say is something really old is this writing system.

And this gets back to the point that we were talking about just a little bit earlier. The reality is, if you look, you can recognize all those letters, but you can't read that. You just can't read, I mean, unless you're really impressive. I mean, it's an absurd-- maybe some of you can read that, but it would be a little bit of a challenge, right? I mean, you know there's a date there. Or there's at least numbers there.

This is what you can read. So you can read that, but you can't read that. But you recognize that these letters are the same. But obviously, the language that they're representing is totally different, right? Now, a Chinese person can read that. And they can read that.

That's the magic here. That's when you realize there's something special about this because yeah, I can read I can read a newspaper from the 20th century. And a middle school student, let's say, middle school student can make his way through her way through newspaper from the 20th century. And they might not be able to pick up Confucius in *The Analects* and read it letter perfectly. But they'd be able to tell you, oh, this is about studying.

They could tell you something. They'd say, I recognize some-- it's about studying. It's about this. So that's really the magic. That's like that information dense, that is something that we can say. Now, I want to emphasize here, in history, one of the ways that you can think of historians is that we specialize in identifying change and continuity.

It's every question comes down to what's changing, and what's staying the same? And what I need to emphasize to you here is that change is constant. There's a lot of change. And when we talk about Chinese history, because you have this literary continuity, it's very easy to sometimes overlook the change.

It's all too easy to sometimes. And to think like, oh yeah, Confucius he's eating dumplings with chopsticks and enjoying bubble tea on the weekend. No, he wasn't. No, he wasn't. He wasn't. That would be totally alien to him. He would be like, what's going on? No, no, no, no.

So you have to always center that change. Be aware of that. It's not that there's this kind of geographical person called China who puts on a different dynastic clothing every few hundred years. That's not what we're talking about.

We can make an argument that the Zhou state, the Han state, all of these others, they're totally different states. They're totally different eras. They have totally different cultures. But once you identify that change, you can then say, OK, what is continuous? What is something that is still there? And the writing system is certainly one of those things because it allows, as was so perfectly stated earlier, people who live in different centuries to talk to one another in a way that you have that divide.

So you might say, I give you an ancient Greek text, and you go well, I could learn ancient Greek, or could look at a translation. But you still you have the divide there of the translation, rather than picking up *The Analects* and being, yeah, I kind recognize this.

Any other final thoughts on this about the writing system? I don't know, pros, cons? I felt like when we were talking about your discussion post, Linda and I, it kind of felt like a lot of people thought there were a lot of cons. So which was interesting, because in class, I'm hearing a lot of pros.

I mean, look, I think one thing, just before moving on, that is just the reality of this is that Chinese kids spend a long time in school. You know what I mean? You have to learn this for many, many, many years. And it takes a lot of rote memorization.

My freshman year at Harvard was destroyed by this. OK, I mean, I had quizzes every day. How do you write the character? There's an embarrassment when you get it wrong. Your teacher gives you the face. And you do this for years. And you feel illiterate for so long, no matter how hard I try. You know what I mean?

But then you have to-- you have to see the rainbow at the end of the cloud. You have to see it's worth it in the end, it really is. It really is. So that's one thing. The learning curve, it takes a long time. And also, perhaps because of all the memorization required with the writing system, that may have influenced, over time, ideas of education in China of what is an ideal education, what should that look like, what should teachers do. That's another thing that you can think about. So everybody good? Any other thoughts on this? All good?

AUDIENCE: Let me speak a little bit more on the negative side. But I'm going to also-- I also [INAUDIBLE] of the English language because we discussed that too, because I had memories of my childhood of my mom making me sit and memorize script. I said I was like, right and right. And it's still a language I think I would want to learn. I think it's important to learn. It's fascinating to learn.

When you discuss that early with combining characters, there's a much more recent example. You pull up the periodic table of elements, you can actually see in each element, there's a part that indicates the type of element, and there's a part that usually indicates how to pronounce. There's a modern variation of that.

And when I was realizing that, that's one of my interests, there's so many ways that character was able to connect to the meaning of the element, they name of the element in the West, other attributes about it. And it was like extremely fascinating.

TRISTAN Wow, wow, that's really interesting, but your point makes me remember, the question, are emojis a script? What
BROWN: do you think? You think they are?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

TRISTAN Tell me why.

BROWN:

AUDIENCE: Well, just like for example, we're talking about cuneiform, so drawing pictures. So you're representing something using a picture. And that's exactly what emojis are. They're communicating emotion through pictures. Or not only that, they also have cameras.

TRISTAN Yeah, OK, OK, OK, good, yeah.

BROWN:

AUDIENCE: I would argue like in their current form, they're not really a script. Because cuneiform, everything is standardized. You can write a full definition, you have all of this kind of grammatical structure around it.

Whereas emojis. It's just an emotion. And you could do the work and come up with a grammar to make it into a script. But as of now, it's not really a script.

TRISTAN So yeah, so your intuition is that it's proto-writing, we're at the stage of labeling the jars, but we don't have
BROWN: grammar yet. But we might get there. I will say this is that I mean, theoretically, I'm fine sending texts using WeChat in China.

But I've realized over the years, from many dear friends, that the art of the Chinese emoji is very, very subtle. It's like, oh, you're asking for something, send this, like three of these, send a rose. And I'm like, why am I sending this? What does this mean?

And then I sent a smiley face, and they said, don't send that smiley face. That smiley face means you hate them. Send, send this smiley face. And it's like there's different smiley faces. And it's like, where is this going to lead?

I mean, definitely, there are a lot of latent rules that this is like the evolving question of what will this look like in 30 or 40 years? Could you imagine just sending a text with only emojis? You've done this before? Just pure emojis? And then the response is just emoji? And then how about the response to that? Still emoji. At what point do you break for language?

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

TRISTAN
BROWN: OK, I see, I see. It would be an interesting experiment, how far can you get just with emojis? And if the answer one day becomes you can just keep going, then you really have-- you have a full writing system.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] like the AI generator where you can make new emojis. So you can have infinite--

TRISTAN
BROWN: Well, this is the-- but yeah, so here's the one thing about this, though, right? So I might love Chinese characters, but I just can't create my own characters. So at a certain point, we need somebody to come in. And in China, in Chinese history, there's always a-- let's just say, rulers who are happy to oblige and say these are the right ones. Stop using the other ones.

And we have this unification drive. So Apple might be doing this, but then it will be a question of eventually, we have to have some consensus on what they mean. Good? All right, all right, all right. So let's now move on. And now, let's take a look at time and periodization.

Let's basically-- we hit, really, our big points in the Shang period. I want to now just look closely at this timeline here because it's a critical. But you also have to break it down a little bit. You can see, the Zhou dynasty lasted a very long time.

Actually, technically, it is the longest lasting royal line in Chinese history. None of the royal lines, none of the dynastic states that come after the Zhou will last this long. But part of the reason for the Zhou royal line's longevity was related to its very unique internal structure as a state. It's really one of a kind.

So what we look at here, if you look, it's almost an 800 year period of the quote, unquote "Zhou dynasty." Now, we can break that down into two sections. And we can subsequently break that down even further. But let's start with the two. You have the Western Zhou, which is the state that is going to be founded, right, by King Wen, King Wu, the Duke of Zhou, the big three first early rulers. It's capital or one of its capitals, the big one, it's going to be Haojing. And it's going to be, quote unquote, in Shaanxi province. It's going to be in the West.

In 771 BC, that capital is basically sacked. The Zhou King has to flee. And the capital is basically moved towards the East. Then you get this Eastern Zhou period. So that's why you could basically say the Western Zhou and the Eastern Zhou, in part, it's a temporal distinction on where the capital was.

The Eastern Zhou period, in turn, can be broken down into two sections. OK, follow me here. I know this kind of gets complicated, but you need to know these terms because they're important. The first part of it is this really beautiful phrase, the Spring and Autumn Period.

The Spring and Autumn Period. And that's actually named after a book. It's going to be one of the Confucian classics, The Spring and Autumn Annals. And that is basically the name of a book, that of the history of the state of Lu, which is where Confucius was from.

Now, Spring and Autumn, in Chinese, is another way of basically just saying a year, the turning of time, a year. So it's like it's this period, the first part of the Eastern Zhou, The Spring and Autumn Period. In 481 BC, there's a big thing that happens. And we get this breakout of the quote, unquote, "Warring States."

Now, in this period of the Warring States, you still have the Zhou royal line in existence, but you have these competing states competing for power and influence and all of that. The last Zhou Royal King basically abdicates in 256 BC. And there's a brief power vacuum, where there's no more Zhou dynasty, there's no more Zhou royal line, but before the unification by that first emperor of the Qin, the big Qin dynasty.

So here's how you can really break this down in a nutshell. And I'm going to give you all the details as we go on in the next 20 minutes, which is that the Zhou state basically is founded with a king who enfeoffs, you could say, his members of his lineage line across the big Zhou royal domain.

And they are loyal to him. They have this very subtle relationship. We'll look into what that relationship exactly means. As time goes on, these enfeoffed, let's say, areas become increasingly independent. Now, they still proclaim their allegiance to the Zhou King. They still proclaim allegiance to the Zhou King.

But the center, the Zhou King, the royal center, weakens over time. These kind of local powers, regional powers, increase their power and influence over time. To the point where eventually, all out fighting breaks out among them. And they start to proclaim themselves as independent states. Eventually, they even proclaim themselves, some of them, as taking the title of king. OK, that happens quite late, but it does happen, a direct challenge to the Zhou royal throne.

What you have to understand, for instance, in breaking this down, is that Confucius, he lives towards this end of the Spring and Autumn Period. He's witnessing the decline of this Zhou royal line, of this center. He's seeing the increasing like fracturing that's going on in the regions. And he's worried about it.

And so that's like a big part of where you can see his thought. And the Confucian movement comes out of that unique era. A really, really kind of I find useful heuristic to understanding what is the Zhou dynasty versus what comes after is like, do you remember in American history, the Articles of Confederation?

There was this thing called the Articles of Confederation. It's like there's all these states, but they don't really have a central government. It's that. And then it didn't work. And then we said, oh, let's redo the Constitution and have a strong one.

So it's kind of like heuristic, very imperfect here. You can think of the Zhou as one really large Articles of Confederation period. There is a center. It is important. Of course, this power dynamic changes over time. But what eventually is going to replace it with the Qin dynasty is going to be a more powerful central state, solving the problem of quote, unquote, "regionalism, factionalism and all of that."

So that's what I basically brought down to you, Western Zhou, Eastern Zhou. Another thing to point out here, all of this, all of this that we're looking at here, never, never say emperor. The only time where you can really use the concept of emperor in the really early period is the early sovereigns, the kind of mythical figures very, very early on, The Yellow Emperor, these kind of pre-Shah dynasty figures, almost in myth.

They are kind of referred to in traditional historiography as quote, unquote "emperors." But really the Zhou King was a wang. He was a king. OK, he's not using this title that we have, starting in 221, of emperor that's going to be a title for the next like almost 2,000 years, for a very long period of time.

So there are no emperors in the Zhou dynasty. Never call it an emperor. It's the king and all of these other enfeoffed aristocrats and such. States, this is a really interesting question, when does, for instance, this region formally become a state rather than a vassal of the Zhou? This is all very, very local, nuanced politics.

But you can just guarantee. It's a gradual process. But by the time you get to the Warring States era, you have basically these independent, somewhat independent polities paying lip service right to the Zhou King. Interestingly, the way in which this breaks out, as you'll see, is that the states will say the Zhou central states, they're so weak. They need to be defended.

My state will defend the Zhou Royal King. So they basically do the play of like, I have the biggest army. Let me go defend the Zhou Royal King. No, your army sucks. Let me do-- let's do our army, right? And they have all this, competition between themselves. And eventually, it's all out warfare. That's the Warring States. OK, so that's kind of what they're doing.

All right, what else do we have here? Let me just keep going-- where's my computer? Oh, it's almost frozen. Hopefully it'll be OK in just a second. Where's it going? I get that thing, that circle that's going around. It's like, come on, circle.

But as I wait for this, questions? I mean, have you encountered these terms and periods before? OK, here we go. It's like hurry up. Let me see. Just want to-- So I guess I'll just-- I'm lucky I got it through here, so I'll just start here.

So one of the things that you could say, as you figure out what's going on here, is that the Zhou state is going to actually come out-- it's originally located to the west of the Shang royal domains. And they're going to overthrow the Shang state.

And in a way, in overthrowing the Shang state, the Zhou has to legitimize and explain, why did you do that? OK, why did you just overthrow the Shang state? So the Zhou does this through creating an ideology, and I define that here as ideas that justify power through writing history, prose, and poetry.

And oftentimes, this catch-all phrase to that ideology is known as the Mandate of Heaven. So basically, what the Zhou is going to say, from a very, very early stage is that, yes, the Shang state was great once upon a time, but then its rulers became corrupt, it lost favor with heaven. And so therefore, heaven basically said, let's kick out the Shang, and now it's the Zhou's turn.

Basically what does it do? It moralizes usurpation. It moralizes the seizure of power. And it moralizes, once you've seized it, the preservation of that power. Because you're saying heaven's on my team. This is one really interesting thing, I'll just say, that happens from the Shang to the Zhou. Remember, in those Oracle bones, I was saying, there's this kind of distant deity called Di. He's way up there. He seems to be very powerful.

He's like this heavenly force. That gets elided in the Zhou period. There's still Di, but he kind of gets replaced with another force, which is Tian, heaven. So this is where you go. It's like the Zhou is going to be like, no, no, no Di, it's heaven. Heaven's the key.

So they kind of-- again, and they moralize it. And you could basically see, we'll talk about all the various ways in which they basically tell their story. OK, all right. Here we go. So let's talk about from the historical record, who founds the Zhou dynasty.

And they're a pretty famous group of people, I have to say. So let me just throw this out here. I'll just put it all there first. These three individuals right here are basically some of the most famous paradigmatic, whatever that is pronounced, rulers in Chinese history.

So the King Wen of Zhou, he is basically seen as the quote, unquote "founder." Then you have the next in line, King Wu of Zhou. So King Wen of Zhou sets up the early state, starts to form alliances, gets people on his team. He dies. King Wu of Zhou basically says, hey, you know what? Let's conquer the Shang.

OK, now I've noticed, I have highlighted in red here these words Wen and Wu. Because actually, this is quite an important gloss in Chinese and in Chinese history. You're going to encounter this again and again and again.

Basically, his name is like Wen is culture. It's something very positive. It's good culture, civilization, all of that. Wu means martial. It doesn't mean military in a violent way. It means it in a good way. So Chinese actually has phrases like [Chinese] wen wu quan cai. It means describe somebody, you're good at writing poetry. You're also good at archery. You're a [Chinese] wen wu quan cai. You're good at both.

You're a great talent in that way. So these rulers of the early Zhou, they have this in their titles. Why this is so important is that when you go across time in Chinese history, look at the royal titles. And you will find that sometimes, a ruler will have this character in his name, the martial one, the founder of the Ming dynasty who really loves killing people has this character in his name.

And some emperors, some rulers in later centuries, have that character, Wen in his name. So from the name, you get a clue. You get a clue of what that ruler might be self-fashioning himself as. So this is the paradigmatic origin of that in the early Zhou with these first two.

King Wu starts the launching of the overthrow of the Shang state. He dies, I think, about three years after that. There's a new ruler that's installed for the Zhou. And this guy over here, the Duke of Zhou, this fascinating fellow basically says, oh, he's far too young. I'll serve as his regent. OK, he's basically a really good advisor.

OK, just so you know, historically, we think this is not true. He just really wanted to maybe rule for a while. So he became regent. What's fascinating about this fellow over here, the Duke of Zhou, he's like one of the most famous just people in Chinese history.

What do I mean by this? If your surname is Zhou and you open up a genealogy pretty much from anywhere in China, it'll be our first ancestor is the Duke of Zhou. He's always going to be like number one. He's just super famous.

One of the reasons he's really famous is in later centuries, it turns out, Confucius loves him. He loves him. He thinks he's the ideal civil servant. In a way, towards the end of his life, he does give up that regency and goes into retirement. He returns it to the Zhou royal line. So he does do that.

But his actual historical record as the Duke of Zhou, let's just say it's historically complicated, but very consequential. He basically helps help set up the Zhou state of what it will be. And it's a state that lasts for, on paper, 800 years. It's no small thing.

Just realize that one of the key battles that basically overthrows the Shang is this Battle of Muye, which is 1046 approximately, give or take. We don't actually know exactly when it is. Funny thing about this battle, we know the exact day and we know the exact month, but we don't know the exact year.

And that's because the 60-year cycle, we know what day it's talking about. We know the year, but it's like we're approximate. Now, there's a clue. There's a clue. One clue is that during the Zhou conquest of the Shang, there's a big record that there was some kind of astronomical phenomenon that was interpreted by the early Zhou rulers as the sign that, OK, now it's our turn to go overthrow the Shang.

And what we know, just as a fact, is that in 1959, these cluster of 5 planets all did-- would have appeared in the night sky. This is actually true. So if you look, it's kind of close to approximately when this battle might have taken place.

So those historical records that kind of say there was this sign in the heavens, and these planets appeared together, what they called stars, these stars appeared together, this might give us a clue of when this approximately occurred.

Now, after the Zhou state, basically, the Shang is overthrown. And the Zhou is set up. And basically, so how are they going to rule this place? Oh, God. I got the circle again. OK, hopefully it's going to be not too long.

But basically, here's what I'll say. I can preface the next story here. This is interesting, you might say, I don't want to overwhelm you with military moments. But this is just an interesting rebellion. This is like the first recorded rebellion in Chinese history, actually. This is an interesting one.

And it's called the Rebellion of the Three Guards, because after the Duke of Zhou basically proclaims himself as regent, relatives of King Wu of Zhou basically say, no, I don't think you should do that. I'm not so happy. What about us? And they actually rebel against the early Zhou, this early state. There's this kind of-- there's this absolute kind of crisis very, very early on.

Now, the Duke of Zhou actually solves the problem. He actually helps put down this rebellion. The Zhou survives this. And how they're going to survive it is they're going to basically implement what will become known, we now know today as this fengjian system. I'm going to go into what the fengjian system is exactly. Sometimes, it's translated as feudalism. But that is a very imprecise academic definition of it. And it kind of gives you wrong impressions of medieval Europe that don't particularly fit that well onto the Zhou case.

Now, I want to pause here for a minute and just ask you, where do you think-- how do we know that this happened? You know what I mean? I know you're sitting there and you're like, I'll take his word for it. But like, how do we know it happened? Any idea?

AUDIENCE: The next dynasty recorded?

TRISTAN
BROWN: Yeah, so the Zhou was 800 years. So that would be-- and the Qin, which replaces it, lasts for a very, very short period of time. They don't have much time to rent, much history. So the Han, you're right, Sima Qian does write the history of lands under heaven of China, you could say, up to that point. So that's one source. But there's other stuff. What other stuff?

AUDIENCE: Does there exist any archeological evidence for these military events?

TRISTAN
BROWN: Yeah. Yes, absolutely. Yes, there are. There is archeological evidence. And what would that archeological evidence be you think?

AUDIENCE: The bronze.

TRISTAN
BROWN: Yeah, so the bronzes. So this is why-- OK, please appear. Yeah, there you go. This is why these bronzes are so important, OK, because what you have to realize, you go you go to a museum, you go to the Met, you go to the National Museum of China in Beijing, you go to Taipei Palace, you go all over, you're going to see bronzes.

And you're going to be like, what are these bronzes? They're fascinating objects. They were very, very difficult to make because they require tons of labor, tons of firewood to smelt this and create the alloy, add tin to copper and all of that to create the bronze.

But you have to realize, some of them are inscribed. And what it basically was was that when the Zhou King would basically give a title to one of his relatives and say, thank you very much for helping me put down this rebellion, I'm going to make you the Marquis of this area, they would be presented with one of these bronzes.

And because the bronzes, some of them have these inscriptions, we actually know that these events happened. This is the incredible thing. Remember when I showed you that [Chinese] bing gong bronze that was like 10th century and it's got Yu the Great on it? That's incredible.

This one, likewise, this was a bronze presented to a relative of the Zhou royal line for helping put down that rebellion I was just talking about. So this bronze, this is one of this-- this is an early Zhou, Western Zhou bronze, unbelievable source, unbelievable source because it confirms that it actually happened.

Nobody's going to fake that. OK, you can't fake that. It's too expensive to fake. And why would you thank somebody for helping you in saying, here's your title if you weren't thanking them and giving them a title? It's just not-- now, you could say maybe he faked it, but no, it's real. It's real. That's held in the British Museum. OK, that's held in the British Museum that you can go see that.

Now, I'll show you, there's a few other ones. When you look, basically, at your readings, this was the readings for today, you'll basically see, this is like this is a late Shang bronze. So the late, so basically, bronzes, as I say, as these complex objects, started to be created, casted prior to the invention of writing.

The Shang, we do have a few surviving Shang bronzes, pretty remarkable. Those would be our big other written sources besides the oracle bones for the late Shang. For the Western Zhou, we have more. Of course, we have even more for the later Zhou periods. But these Western Zhou inscriptions are really, really fascinating.

Let me just read you a little bit. This is a Western Zhou inscription, early 10th century BCE, really early Western Zhou, fairly early. It was the ninth month when the King was in Zhongzhou and laid charge on Yu. The King spoke thus, Yu, the greatly illustrious King Wen received heaven's great mandate. When King Wu succeeded King Wen, he built a state, ridding it of evils, extensively possessed the four quarters of the realm, and grandly governed its people, attending to the affairs of the state, alas, in the case of spirits, none dare overindulge in making burnt offerings and performing the winter sacrifices. None dared get intoxicated.

OK, well, OK, so basically, these are really interesting sources. But why you should pay attention to them and take a look at them is exactly what I was just talking about. They were gifts. And they tell you, this is the Zhou state and the Zhou royal line telling its story.

It's like a PR campaign. Here's your bronze. Thank you very much. By the way, we have heaven's mandate. Remember, our ancestors were fantastic. Remember, the Shang was awful. Remember, right? So then you go and you look at the actual the book of documents, those quote, unquote classics that we're going to see, they kind of-- they accord with this.

Some of those documents in there basically say this is what the Zhou said. And these bronzes confirm this is what the Zhou said. OK, this is what the Zhou was telling these folks.

OK, in the last five minutes, basically, let me explain, what is this fengjian system? So what you have to understand is that the Zhou King assigned basically pieces of real estate around China, the place we call China today, to his allies. In the very, very early Zhou period, they tended to be relatives of the Zhou royal line, but they weren't exclusively relatives of Joe royal line.

Actually, the relatives of the Shang royal line, they even got like some enfeoffment in a very faraway district that nobody wanted. So you have to play politics with this kind of stuff. So feng, literally in Chinese, is like to give somebody land.

So you're basically granting this person land. And that person is going to be able to raise taxes. It's going to manage the area, make sure security is going OK. They're even going to eventually mint their own currencies. They become pretty independent, in a sense.

But they still recognize the authority of the Zhou King. If the Zhou King is ever in trouble, they help raise an army and go help him out. They also send some grain to him, that kind of thing. So this quote, unquote "fengjian" system.

And you could basically say that the structure of the Zhou state kind of looks something like this. OK, there's heaven. And then the King of Zhou, who answers, of course, to heaven. He's got a direct line. The regional rulers that he's enfeoffed across China, and there are different aristocratic titles, like there's [Chinese] bo zi nan. There's all of these titles that you'll see.

Beneath them are ministers. And ministers can either work for the Zhou Royal King or for one of those regional, I won't say rulers, but let's say, stewards of the land who eventually become rulers. Grand masters, who are like a slightly lower ranking official. And then the lowest, servicemen in this kind of bureaucratic rank, the shi.

This is a very, very interesting category here. The shi were not enfeoffed with land. Everybody else got a bit of land. The shi did not really have land. But they were recognized with this title. What's interesting about this, of course, wild card group right here, the shi, this is a very loaded term.

It's going to be a character, a word that we see for the rest of Chinese history. It basically-- here, it means some of serviceman. Eventually in China, it comes to mean like the scholar elite, a member of that scholarly elite.

But it also in Japan, it retains a kind of element of the serviceman thing in the military role with the samurai. The samurai have this character. That's actually a very old rendering of it. Japan preserved that meaning of it.

So this kind of ranking, what is so interesting about this final group, the shi? Confucius's family comes out of this group. So that's where his origins, he's a bit of an aristocratic background, but the lowest ranked one. Of course, that's what he would be.

The other thing I would just say is that there's a thing that you will see in the early Zhou that's kind of often linked to this fengjian enfeoffed structure called the well-field system. In theory, this is how it worked. Farmers would basically tend to eight plots of land around one common plot. And that common plot would be tended together. And that would be sent up as taxation.

We don't know exactly if this well-field system was actually implemented and used, but we know that the Confucians in later centuries idealized it. They thought it existed. They thought it was like an ideal order, where everybody has its place. And it's kind of equal.

Whether it existed or not, it's up for debate. But you could say they thought it existed. By the way, you might say, why is that well-field? Because think of the Chinese character for well, it looks like this. That's why it's called well-field system. So that's the structure.

All right, really, really quickly, last minute, if my computer cooperates, and OK. So this question, really, really quickly, fengjian is oftentimes glossed into English as "feudalism." OK, this is kind of complicated because in a way, it gets into the question, what is feudalism?

Does it refer to a Zhou political order? Does it refer in the Marxist sense to a stage of economic development in human history? Does it refer to something that happened in England? It's a very imprecise term. So on a class on Monday, we'll start off, I'll break it down for you to understand.

How do we understand this term in Chinese, fengjian? How do we understand feudalism? And then we'll go from there. And then end of next week, I think we get to Confucius. So we're on track, basically. Good to see you. Good to see you. Have a good weekend.