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# The Change of Rural Leadership in China

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# Chinese Ancient Civilization

- **Dong-Yi Culture**

- *born in the Shandong Peninsula and later spread to the lower reaches of the Yellow and Huai rivers in the Neolithic Age, greatly influenced ancient China, and had the leading role in making the Yellow River Valley Culture, the root of Chinese civilization.*

- **The Hundred Schools of Thought**

- *philosophers and schools that flourished in the Shandong Peninsula and eastern Henan area from 770BCE to 221BCE.*

- **Han Culture**

- *The Han Culture inherited and carried forward the essence of The Hundred Schools of Thought. The idea of the combination of Confucianism and Legalism led to the rise of Han Culture, which started from the Han Dynasty, was inherited and carried forward by the Tang Dynasty (618-907CE), and lasted in China for more than 2,000 years.*

# Evolution of Chinese Political System and Rural Leadership

The Chinese political system evolved

**From:**

Feudalism System and Patriarchal Clan System in the Zhou Dynasty

**Into:**

Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System in the Qin and Han dynasties,

**lasted** for more than 2,000 years.

- **Zhou Dynasty (about 1046BCE-256BCE):**  
Feudalism System and Patriarchal Clan System
- **Qin Dynasty (221BCE-207BCE):**  
Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
- **Han Dynasty (202BCE-220CE):**  
Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
- **Tang Dynasty (618-907CE):**  
Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
- **Song Dynasty (960-1279CE):**  
Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
- **Ming Dynasty (1368-1644BCE):**  
Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
- **Qing Dynasty (1636-1912CE):**  
Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
- **Republic of China (1912-1949):**  
Bourgeois Democratic Republicanism
- **People's Republic of China (1949-):**  
Socialist system, people's congress system, the system of ethnic regional autonomy, Multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and "one country, two systems"

# Zhou Dynasty (about 1046BCE-256BCE)

- **Political system:** Feudalism System and Patriarchal Clan System
  - Hereditary fiefs were powerful in their own right.
  - Four-level local administrations:
    - ❖ Guo (capital of the state and fief)
    - ❖ Dou (big city)
    - ❖ Yi (small city)
    - ❖ Ye or Bi (the place outside a city)
- **Rural leadership**
  - Commune organizations
    - ❖ Xiang: a settlement with 12,500 families
    - ❖ Dang: a settlement with 500 families
  - Rural leaders
    - ❖ aristocrats

## Qin Dynasty (221BCE-207BCE)

- Political system: Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
  - The central government vertically managed local governments.
  - Food provisions as an official's salary instead of giving them hereditary fiefs.
  - Three councilors and nine ministers,
  - Jun (Commandery or Prefecture) and Xian (County)
- Rural leadership
  - Xiang (township), Ting and Li
    - ❖ Xiang: had ten Tings.
    - ❖ Ting: had jurisdiction over a rural area about five kilometers across.
    - ❖ Li: a big village or several small villages.
  - Rural leaders

The government appointed three officials for a Xiang, including:

  - ❖ a Sanlao, who was in charge of enlightenment;
  - ❖ a Youzhi (for a Xiang which had more than 5,000 persons), or a Sefu (for a Xiang which had less than 5,000 persons), who was in charge of litigation and collecting taxes; and
  - ❖ a Youjiao, who was in charge of patrol and manhunt.



## Han Dynasty (202BCE-220CE)

- Political system: Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System  
nearly the same with the Qin Dynasty
- Rural leadership  
nearly the same with the Qin Dynasty
- The Han emperors abandoned the Qin's legalism's primacy. The idea of the combination of Confucianism and Legalism led to the rise of Han Culture, which was inherited and carried forward by the Tang Dynasty (618-907CE), and lasted in China for more than 2,000 years.

## Tang Dynasty (618-907CE)

- **Political system:** Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
  - The central government vertically managed local governments.
  - Three departments of Chancellery and six boards under the Chancellery
  - Zhou (Commandery or Prefecture) and Xian (County)
  
- **Rural leadership**
  - Xiang (township), Li and Village

The village was formally incorporated into the state political system as a lowest level of administrative rank.

  - **Rural leaders**

The government appointed heads for a Xiang, Li and Village.

The government appointed a male adult without scholarly honor and official rank to be the head of a village. The village head's main duty was to check illicit and illegal offenses, and also help the Li head in collecting taxes and corvee-labors

## Song Dynasty (960-1279CE)

### ■ Political system: Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System

- The central government vertically managed local governments.
- Two-division system, including:
  - ❖ Zhongshuyuan (Chancery or executive secretariat), which was in charge of administrative affairs, and
  - ❖ Shumiyuan, which was in charge of military affairs.
- The power of the military was decentralized to four departments: Shumiyuan, Sanya, War department and Personnel department.
- Zhou (Commandery or Prefecture) and Xian (County)

### ■ Rural leadership

- Bao-jia system (a military management system in rural areas for the purpose of conscription)
  - ❖ Bao: had ten households.
  - ❖ Big Bao: had ten Baos.
  - ❖ Chief Bao: had ten big Baos.
- Rural leaders

The government appointed heads for baos.

Most of the heads were heads of the family clans or leading elders.



# Ming Dynasty (1368-1644CE)

## ■ Political system: Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System

- The central government vertically managing local governments.
- Three powers:
  - ❖ Zhongshusheng, Chancery or executive secretariat, with six boards under it, which was in charge of administrative affairs;
  - ❖ Da Dudufu, headquarters of the military governor, who was in charge of military affairs; and
  - ❖ Yutaishi, censorate, who was in charge of supervisory affairs.
- Zhou (Commandery or Prefecture) and Xian (County)
- Three divisions for local governments:
  - ❖ Chengxuan Buzheng for administrative affairs,
  - ❖ Tixing Ancha for supervisory affairs, and
  - ❖ Duzhihui for military affairs.

## ■ Rural leadership

- Li-jia system
  - ❖ One-hundred-and-ten households formed one Li; the top ten of these households, who had paid the highest grain taxes, rotated as the head of Li.
  - ❖ The other one hundred households were divided into ten Jia(s); each household rotated as the head of Jia.
- Elder system
  - ❖ Each Jia selected three, five, or ten moral elders, who were above fifty, to be in charge of resolving local disputes, supervising people, and persuading people to do good.
- Bao-jia system

## Qing Dynasty (1636-1912CE)

- **Political system:** Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System
  - The Qing Dynasty (1636-1912) was set up by Manchus. The Qing Dynasty's political system was similar to the Hongwu and Yongle of the Ming Dynasty.
- **Rural leadership**
  - Bao-jia system
  - Li-jia system
  - Again Bao-jia system

## Republic of China (1912-1949)

- **Political system:** Bourgeois Democratic Republicanism
  - The government set up Province and County in its jurisdiction.
- **Rural leadership**
  - The government administrative system had four levels under the county level, including county level, district level, township level, and village level. Each administrative level had government administrative offices, except the village. The government appointed a village's head under the guidance of the township office. Most of the villages' heads were heads of the family clans or leading elders.
  - Bao-jia system

# People's Republic of China (1949-)

## ■ Political system:

- Socialist system, people's congress system, the system of ethnic regional autonomy, multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and "one country, two systems"
- The government set up Province, Prefecture and County in its jurisdiction.

## ■ Government rural administrative system and Rural Leadership

- **1949-1956:** four levels - county level, district level, township level, and village level. Each level had Party branch, and Party committee.
- **1956-1958:** three levels - county level, township level, and village level. Each level had Party branch, and Party committee.
- **1958- 1984:** three levels - county level, People's Commune level, and village level. Each level had Party branch, and Party committee.
- **1984-present:** three levels - county level, township level, and village level. Each level had Party branch, and Party committee.

## ■ The political movements in China

- 1957-1958: the Rectification Movement
- 1958-1959: the Great Leap Forward
- 1966-1976: the Great Cultural Revolution

## The small-scale peasant economy and its influence on the political system and rural leadership

- In 2,000 years of Chinese feudal society, the small-scale peasant economy under the landlord land ownership was the main production force in the agricultural production sector.
- main features: small production, small private ownership, and family as a social unit in the agricultural field
- The Xiang, Ting, and Li political system in the Qin and Han dynasties, the Xiang, Ting and Village political system in the Tang Dynasty, and the Bao-jia and Li-jia systems in the Song, Ming and Qing dynasties were all formed based on the family as a social unit.



## The patriarchal clan culture and its influence on the political system and rural leadership

- *Yijing*, the ancient Chinese philosophy, laid the road map for patriarchal clan familial perception.
- ❖ *Hexagram of Qian: the symbol of heavens, sovereign; creative, which creates all creatures; the man.*
- ❖ *Hexagram of Kun: the symbol of earth, humility; the receptive, all creatures get life through its vitality; the woman.*
- Confucianism attached the most importance to blood kin and the ethics and morality of human relations.
- Confucianists consolidate a family, a clan, and a country with filial piety and loyalty, educate them with Confucian benevolence, righteousness and other moralities, and manage them within the framework of the patriarchal clan culture.
- Confucian political theory: The national politics and the patriarchal clan culture were merged into one by the Confucian political theory. The patriarchal clan culture was brought into the monarchy ruling system.

# Conclusion

- During the long history of Feudalism China, the political systems of China were the Feudalism System and Monarchical Centralism System, while in rural areas, the patriarchal clan culture, which was the most important base of Chinese traditional culture, had become the main force to influence the rural leadership.
- By studying the history and past mistakes, we would learn that the best political system and rural leadership should conform to the productive forces level of development, and meet the needs of traditional culture.