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Legalism in the Ch'in (Qin) Dynasty
(221-206 B.C.E.)
Qin Shi Huang

Qin took his throne in the state of Qin at age 13. The first thing the young king did was to order the construction of his tomb. He ordered 720,000 conscript laborers (non-paid) to hurry up and build his tomb to his specifications. The second thing he did was go to war with his neighbors, including the last Zhou king. It took him quite a while to get rid of everyone who was bothering him in ancient China. Finally, all of China was under his control. That had never happened before. The different feudal states in China had been at war with each since Xia times. Big ruling families rose up, but they never controlled all of China. Qin was the first. The new ruler wanted a new name. He did not want to be called a king. That was too common. He chose emperor.

First Emperor Qin set about running all of China just as he had so successfully run the state of Qin. His dynasty lasted only 15 years, not because he was overthrown, but because he died of natural causes. In the 15 years that he was First Emperor Qin, he accomplished an amazing amount of change. He did not accomplish things kindly. Much of his rule was cruel. It was illegal to whine about Qin's government. If you simply said that things could improve, you could be put to death. First Emperor Qin was a legalist, and he ran his dynasty with absolute control and extreme and harsh punishment. Being Qin, he started with first things first.

BUREAUCRACY: First, he got organized.

- **Management: China was divided into provinces, each with two government officials in charge.** He divided the empire into 36 provinces. He divided each of the provinces into districts. He put two officials in charge of each province – a governor and a defender. Part of their job was to put strong people in charge in each district.
- **Bureaucracy: Workers were trained, paid, and reported to supervisors.** That was not enough order for First Emperor Qin. He wanted trained people in charge at every level. To accomplish this, he organized a system in which everyone is appointed to a specific job, and everyone is trained for that job. Each worker received a salary. Each worker had to follow strict rules and report to a supervisor. People at each level supervised those below them.