

Sample Encyclopedia entries

Here are some sample answers. All of these have more information than you actually need to get full points. For all of them I did a bit of research outside the Ebrey book, and gave you footnotes. Normally an encyclopedia entry does not have footnotes (although it may have sources/suggested readings). I put these in so you can see where things are coming from. The footnotes in red are my comments about why I did it this way. You should not have notes like that in your final entry. I have at least one quote from something in each of these, although they are not necessary

Depending on which terms you choose you may or may not be able to answer these just with the stuff from the Ebrey reading. In any case, doing a bit of research helps a lot. **Note that all of these answers explain both what the thing is and why it matters to the big changes and themes in Chinese history.** If you are having problems with this I can help you. Ideally, by reading these answers your fellow students should be able to learn a lot that they could use in their mid-term or final essays. It helps to be pretty explicit in this part.

The first one, **oracle bones**, is pretty easy, in that the Ebrey reading gives you a lot of information, the Wikipedia article is surprisingly good (although sort of a mess) and there are lots of easily located resources. Our library has most of the books Ebrey mentions in her Selected Readings. For this, and I mostly drew on the Keightley stuff. Note that writing this answer involved thinking about why it matters -for this class-. Ebrey has a whole section on how oracle bone script was the foundation of Chinese writing and the script's role in later East Asian history, which is not really relevant for this class.

-I picked this term because it comes right at the beginning of the class, and so reading this answer and thinking about our class discussion should help you understand how to write these sorts of answers.

Sunzi gets almost no mention in Ebrey, and the Wikipedia entry is awful. On the other hand, there is a lot of stuff in the Lewis book you can use.

-I picked this term because it is an example of one where Ebrey and Wikipedia will not help you much. It is also a good one for getting into an understanding of the Hundred Schools and the age of philosophers.

Wu Zetian is a term that Ebrey has a lot on, although Wikipedia has more, although it is also inaccurate in places. You could draw on the Rothschild book here, but I am not sure you need to.

-I chose this term because it is a good example of a person who is so important that you can't really talk about everything. It is also one that gives you a good picture of court politics and the social changes in the Tang.

Oracle Bones

Bones, often the bottom shell of a turtle, used in the Shang and Zhou to ask questions of the ancestors or "powers". The bones would be heated and the cracks read to see what the answer was. Scholars have found thousands of these bones at Anyang, the last Shang capitol, sometimes with an engraving of the question, the answer, and a note if the interpretation ended up being correct. These are the most important written sources we have for Shang history. The ability to get answers from the ancestors and manipulate the actions of the supernatural was one of the sources of the legitimacy of the Shang and Zhou kings. The king's relationship with his ancestors is also a model for the Chinese family, which consisted of multiple generations of people, both living and dead. The ancestors would only give answers if they were properly supplied. Making bronze ritual vessels, warfare, agriculture and hunting were all connected to supplying the ancestors.¹ One could say that the entire Shang society existed to make the oracle bones work. The oracle bones also an important source for historians because they show changing ideas about religion. The targets and purposes of divination changed over time. In the reign of Wu Ding (1250 BCE? Early Anyang in any case) diviners were likely to ask the

¹ This is from Lewis

powers or ancestors about things like the weather, success in battle, or building settlements. Offerings were promised if they would help with earthly affairs. Here is an example of an early inscription.²

Crack-making on *jiazi* (day 1) Zheng divined "In praying for harvest to the Sun (we) will cleave ten dappled cows and pledge one hundred dappled cows."

Keightley explains that this divination is unique in being addressed to the Sun, but typical in that 10 cattle are being offered, with 100 more to follow if the harvest is good.³ So the oracle bones accompany offerings to give to the powers or ancestors to get them to do or not do something. Many of the questions were specifically about sacrifice: Who should we make offerings for to fix this problem? Later divinations were more likely to be perfunctory, optimistic (only offering the ancestors the option of a good outcome), made by the king himself, addressed to his ancestors, on a regular cycle, and unlikely to ask the ancestors to do anything. Keightley suggests that this reflects a change in ideas about what the powers and ancestors could do and the extent to which the living could influence them.⁴ The declining importance of oracle bone divination may be part of the ritual revolution and the separation of heaven and human society.⁵

Sunzi

The name given to a book⁶ *Sunzi bingfa* (Sunzi's Art of War) The book was supposedly written by Sun Wu, a general who may have lived from 544-496 BCE. The book is a good example of the books by "masters" that would be at the center of philosophical debate in the Warring States period. It had a tenuous connection to its supposed author and may have been written much later or compiled over a long period. This was common for many of these books, although *Sunzi bingfa* does seem to be a legitimately early text, whoever wrote it. It eventually developed a whole commentary literature and became central to a "school of thought", just like many other texts. The later military expert Sun Bin was supposedly descended from Sun Wu, and later military texts often refer to it. This is a good example of the relationships between schools, teachers and texts that was common in many schools of thought. The military masters are not always lumped in with the philosophers (although *Sunzi bingfa* is rather Daoist), but they came from the same social class and were doing many of the same things.⁷ Sunzi, like Confucius, was one of the wandering consultants (all members of the *shi* class) who tried to convince kings to hire them to bring order to their kingdoms and China. Here is a story about one of his job interviews.

Sun Tzu Wu was a native of Ch'i. He was granted an audience by Ho-lu., King of Wu (r. 514-496 B.C.) because of his arts of war.

Ho-lu said, "I have read all of your thirteen chapters. Could you give a small demonstration of their use in drilling troops?"

"I could," he replied.

Ho-Ju said, "Could you demonstrate them with women?"

"I could," he said.

At this, Ho-Ju granted him permission [to proceed] and had the palace beauties come

² This section may seem like it is plagiarized from Wikipedia, but it is not. I wrote it for this answer then added the section to Wikipedia.

³ David N. Keightley "The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and its Legacy" in Keightley, David N. *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*. Albany, NY: State Univ of New York Press, 2014. p.161

⁴ David N. Keightley "Late Shang Divination: The Magico-Religious Legacy" in Keightley, *These Bones Shall Rise Again* p.108, David N. Keightley "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty" in Loewe, Michael, and Edward L. Shaughnessy, eds, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. p.243-5

⁵ This last point is something that you would probably not realize until later in the class, but I put it in anyway.

⁶ I chose to write about the book rather than the person (although the term could go either way) since we know almost nothing about the person

⁷ First section is not really about the content of the book at all, but about what its history shows us about how texts and schools

out, obtaining 180 women. Sun Tzu divided them into two companies, made the king's two favorite ladies the company commanders, and had them all hold up halberds. He issued his orders. "Do you know where your front, left, right, and rear is?"

The women said, "We do."

Sun Tzu said, "When you go forward, face to the front. When you go left, face your left hand. When you go right, face your right hand; When you go back, face behind you."

The women said "Yes, sir."

The standing orders having been proclaimed, he set out axes. then repeated the signals four or five times. After this, he gave the drum beat for a right turn. The women burst out laughing.

Sun Tzu said, "When the standing orders are not clear, and the signals not familiar, it is the commander's fault."

Once more, he repeated the signals four or five times, then gave the drum beat for a left turn. Once more the women burst out laughing.

Sun Tzu said, "When the standing orders are not clear, and the signals not familiar, it is the commander's fault. When they are clear yet are not followed, it is the officers' fault ."

He prepared to behead the left and right company commanders.

The King of Wu had been observing from his terrace. When he saw that they were preparing to behead his favorite ladies he was aghast and hastily dispatched a messenger to pass on his orders. "We already know you can command troops, general. Without these two ladies, Our food will be tasteless . We prefer you do not behead them."

Sun Tzu said, "Your servant has already received his appointment as commander. 'When a commander is in his camp, there will be orders from his sovereign he will not accept.'

He then beheaded the two company commanders as a warning, made the next in line the company commanders, and once more beat the drum. When the women went left, right, forward , back, knelt, and stood, [their movements were as if] marked out by a carpenter's square, compass, and plumb line. [*2162*] None dared make a sound. After this, Sun Tzu sent a messenger to report to the king: "The troops having been trained, Your Majesty might try coming down to observe them; however Your Majesty would like to employ them, even marching them through fire and water, could all be done."

The King of Wu said, "Enough, general. Retire to your hostel, We do not wish to come down and observe."

Sun Tzu said, "The king only loves the words, he cannot make use of the reality ."

After this, Ho-lu knew that Sun Tzu could command troops and in the end appointed him commander. [Later when Wu] defeated mighty Ch'u to its west and entered its capital Ying, awed Ch'i and Chin to its north and spread its fame among the feudal lords, it was due in part to Sun Tzu..⁸

The story reflects a number of things about the new class of experts and what they claimed to be able to do. In hiring a commander the lord is effectively giving up control of his army to an expert. More importantly, Sunzi could make anyone, even concubines, into a soldier or a commander, just like Confucius could make anyone a gentleman.⁹ The story, like the book as a whole, reflects the change in warfare from the chariot-based, aristocratic warfare of the Shang and Early Zhou to the infantry-based and bureaucratic warfare of the Warring States. *Sunzi bingfa* was aimed at a modern, professional military commander (rather than a king who led his own troops in battle) and emphasized the importance of planning and strategy over raw courage and skill at fighting.¹⁰

⁸ This quote is way too long, but I included it anyway. This would be a tricky thing for you to find. There is a version of it in the Wikipedia article, but it is hard to find a translation of the original story (from Sima Qian) in all the rubbish on the internet. I got it from Sima Qian, William H. Nienhauser, and Tsai Fa. Cheng trans. *The Grand Scribe's Records*. Volume VII Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. pp. 69-72. This is in our library. It is also one of the few readings we will have using the Wade-Giles romanization

⁹ Section on what it shows us about social change.

¹⁰ Actually not much on the content of the book.

Wu Zetian

Also known as Empress Wu and Emperor Wu. She lived from 624 to 705. Raised in a provincial aristocratic family, she rose from being a low-ranking Imperial consort to being basically co-ruler during the reign of her husband Gaozong and then effectively sole ruler during the reigns of his two sons, one of whom she deposed. She outmaneuvered her rivals, killed a lot of people, and was in general the most clever and ruthless person in court politics for years. None of that that is actually new. Empresses, consorts and empress dowagers had been politically powerful since at least the Han, and several of them had tremendous power and gave important offices to members of their natal families, making consort families important political actors. (Wang Mang, who usurped the Han dynasty, came from the family of an Empress Dowager).¹¹ What made Wu Zetian unique was that she actually created her own dynasty, the Zhou, 690-705 and that she made a number of important changes in how rulers were legitimated, and how officials won office. As a female most of the Confucian forms of legitimacy were closed to her, although she did try to win “Confucian” legitimacy by things like sponsoring scholarship and poetry and connecting herself to various images of traditional Chinese motherhood. She drew on Buddhist and Daoist and other ideas to legitimate her rule and patronized Buddhism by establishing monasteries, commissioning Buddha images. The Great Wild Goose Pagoda which is still in Xian is probably her best known building. These things were not that unusual. Rulers in the Age of Disunion/ Cosmopolitanism had patronized and drawn on Buddhism and Daoism to legitimate their power. She also was eager to recruit officials from outside the old Northwestern aristocratic elite, and did this mainly by expanding the importance of the examination system. This was an important step in changing the relationship between the rulers and the educated elite, and in bringing a new class of people into government who were more reliant on the throne for their status than the old elite had been. During her period in power she won military victories in Korea and Tibet, and provided generally stable and uncorrupt government and prosperity. Despite this Confucian historians despised her as “like a hen that crowed” for being a female ruler. Countless lurid stories circulated about her murdering her own child (possibly true) her own sister (probably true. She apparently did have her sister have sex with the Emperor while she herself was pregnant, to keep him from turning to a new concubine.), committing incest (technically true), her “mincing and pickling of enemies, grinding their bones like pepper dust” (probably not true although she did have a lot of people killed), and granting the servant Xue Aocao the title “Lord of Perfect Satisfaction” because of her perfect satisfaction with his huge penis. (Definitely made up, but often repeated.) While these sorts of stories made her a leading example of the evils of female rule even Confucians sometimes praised her. Sima Guang (1019-1086) said of her

“Even though the Grand Dowager excessively used emolument and rank to gain the hearts of the people, those who proved irresponsible in office were dismissed and punished. The Grand Dowager grasped the handle of punishment and reward in order to administer the empire. Government issued from her alone. She possessed enlightened oversight and good judgement of character. Therefore, at that time outstanding and sagely men competed to be employed by her.”¹²

¹¹ So first a section on how she is typical, which will be followed by a section on what made her unique.

¹² All of these come from N. Harry Rothschild *Wu Zhao: China's Only Woman Emperor* New York: Pearson, 2008 pp. 93, 208-210. As a rule you don't need to add a bunch of lurid and probably untrue details. In this case, since she is almost as important for her reputation as for her life, it fits.