People built the first villages in China around 3000 B.C. Gradually, Chinese society grew more complex. Various groups fought among themselves for land and power.

Warfare in early China was similar to warfare in other ancient societies. Soldiers fought with spears, maces, and bows and arrows. They wore armor made from leather reinforced with metal. Some Chinese armor was made from tough rhinoceros skin. The Chinese even outfitted their horses with armor, which protected them from enemy spears and arrows.

The Chinese began using chariots in battle in the 1200s B.C. Generals used the vehicles as mobile command posts. The general rode in the chariot, along with a drummer, a driver, and archers. The archers defended the chariot with bows and arrows. As the chariot raced from place to place on the battlefield, the general gave orders to the drummer. He pounded out signals on his drum. These signals directed troops on the battlefield.
ANCIENT GUIDE TO WARFARE

Around 500 B.C., a Chinese general named Sun-tzu wrote a book about military strategy. Called *The Art of War*, it was the first ever military manual. The book includes chapters on fighting on difficult terrain, attacking the enemy, and using spies. It also includes advice on strategy and planning. Sun-tzu offered this and much more advice to other commanders:

- If [your opponent] is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them.
- Attack him [the enemy] where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.
- Bring war material with you from home, but forage [take food from] on the enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs.
- If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.
- Whoever is first in the field and awaits the coming of the enemy will be fresh for the fight; whoever is second in the field and has to hasten to battle will arrive exhausted.
- The spot where we intend to fight must not be made known; for then the enemy will have to prepare against a possible attack at several different points; and his forces being thus distributed in many directions, the numbers we shall have to face at any given point will be proportionately few.
Around 400 B.C., the ancient Chinese made a big step forward in military technology. They invented the crossbow. This was the ancient world’s most accurate long-range weapon. The ancient Chinese crossbow was similar to ordinary bows, but it was much more powerful. It was mounted horizontally (crosswise) on a frame. It had a crank or lever for drawing back the bowstring and arrow. An archer didn’t have to pull on the string using muscle power alone. The crossbow also had a catch to hold the bowstring in place until the archer was ready to shoot. Bigger, stronger, and steadier than ordinary bows, crossbows could shoot arrows farther and with more force. They could shoot accurately to about 1,320 feet (400 meters).

A GREAT WALL

Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi started construction of the Great Wall of China around 214 B.C. Designed to protect China from northern invaders, the wall was one of the most ambitious military engineering projects in history.

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“To take untaught men to war is called throwing them away.”

—Confucius, Chinese philosopher, circa 500 B.C.
Workers began by connecting a series of existing walls in the northern part of China. They also built watchtowers along the wall. The towers enabled soldiers to keep guard for invaders.

The wall stood 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9 m) high. It had a road on top, wide enough for five horsemen to ride abreast. If an enemy attacked, Chinese army units could quickly move along the wall and counterattack. Army units camped at the base of the wall. They signaled one another with fires built on top. Later emperors expanded the Great Wall. It eventually stretched about 4,500 miles (7,240 km) east to west across northern China.

**Terra-cotta warriors**

In 1974 farmers in Xi’an, China, made an astounding discovery. When digging a well, they happened into a giant underground pit. The pit contained thousands of life-sized and half-sized terra-cotta (clay) figures.
The farmers had discovered the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi, the emperor who began construction of the Great Wall of China. The figures were fashioned to look like cavalrymen and foot soldiers. They were placed in the grave to guard Qin Shi Huangdi after death.

Eventually, archaeologists found nearly eight thousand figures in a number of different pits. The figures are incredibly detailed. Their clay clothing and armor are shaped to look just like the real thing. Even the soles of their shoes are adorned with tread patterns. The warriors include different kinds of soldiers: infantrymen (foot soldiers), charioteers, cavalrymen, crossbowmen, and officers. They stand in formation, as if prepared for battle. By studying the figures, archaeologists have learned about Chinese military clothing and operations of the era.

The martial arts are ancient Asian combat and self-defense techniques. The earliest form of martial arts, kung fu, developed in China in the 1500s B.C. In kung fu, an unarmed fighter uses the hands and the feet to strike or kick an opponent. In ancient China, warriors used kung fu against enemies. The ancient Chinese also used kung fu as physical and spiritual exercise.

Over the following centuries, Asian people developed many more types of martial arts. Around the world, many modern people practice martial arts for both exercise and self-defense.
In 1998 archaeologists working at the site found another burial pit. This one contained hundreds of small pieces of limestone. Most of the pieces were square or rectangular. Each piece contained tiny holes. Archaeologist realized that the pieces all fit together. By stringing copper wires through the holes, archaeologists fitted the stone pieces together to re-create suits of stone armor and helmets. These objects had not been made for battle. They had been created specially to embellish the emperor’s tomb.