

張
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Extraordinary Chinese People

Ancient times

Zhang Heng

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Extraordinary Chinese People - Ancient Times Zhang Heng

This is an authorized English version published under special agreement with the proprietor for sale in Hong Kong SAR, China; Macau SAR, China and Taiwan, China.

Original Simplified Chinese version
@2023 by Hebei Science & Technology Press
Written and illustrated by LANSEXIAOXIANG

English version
@2026 by Stanford House
Rm 611-612, 6th Floor, Citimark, 28 Yuen Shun Circuit, Shatin,
New Territories, Hong Kong
Tel: 852 2330 2533 Fax: 852 2330 3598

ISBN 978-962893318-1

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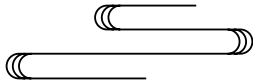
Zhang Heng



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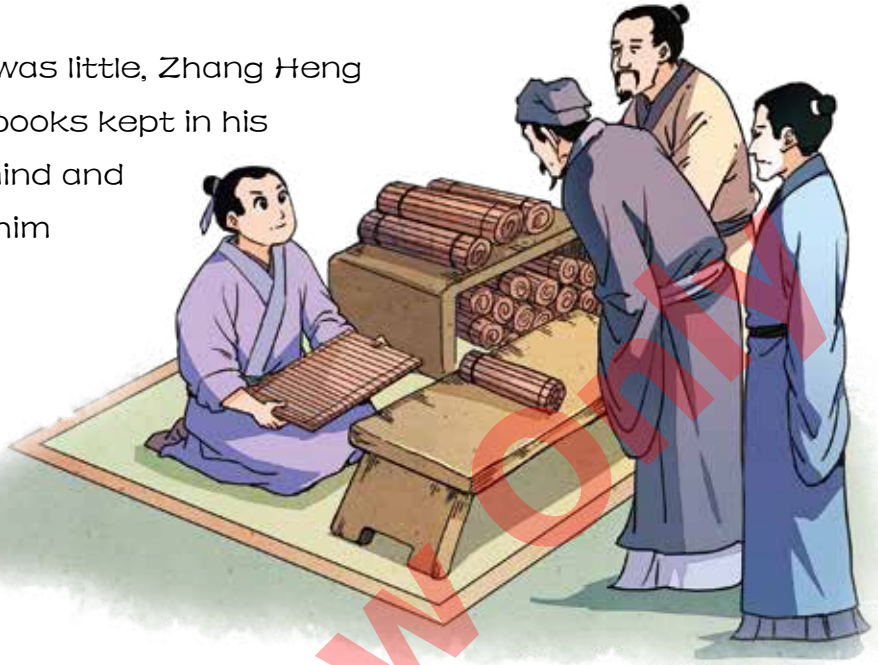
Zhang Heng (張衡)
(AD 78–139) was a
brilliant scientist who
lived in the Eastern Han
Dynasty. A mountain on
the far side of the Moon
is named after him.



Zhang Heng's grandfather had once been a governor, known for being honest and fair. However, the family later fell on hard times, and they often had to rely on relatives to get by.



From the time he was little, Zhang Heng loved reading the books kept in his home. His sharp mind and hard work helped him achieve great things even as a teenager.



He was curious about everything and loved asking questions. His favourite moments were lying on a bamboo mat on summer nights, gazing up at the starry sky.





One evening, young Zhang Heng noticed that a star seemed to have moved from its usual place. Surprised, he asked his grandfather, 'Grandpa, do stars move?'

His grandfather, who was very knowledgeable, smiled and said, 'Yes, stars do move across the sky.'

Zhang Heng was thrilled and asked why. But his grandfather replied, 'That's something for your generation to figure out.'

Little did he know, Zhang Heng really would grow up to study the stars! He even became a supporter of the Huntian (Celestial Sphere) Theory (渾天說).



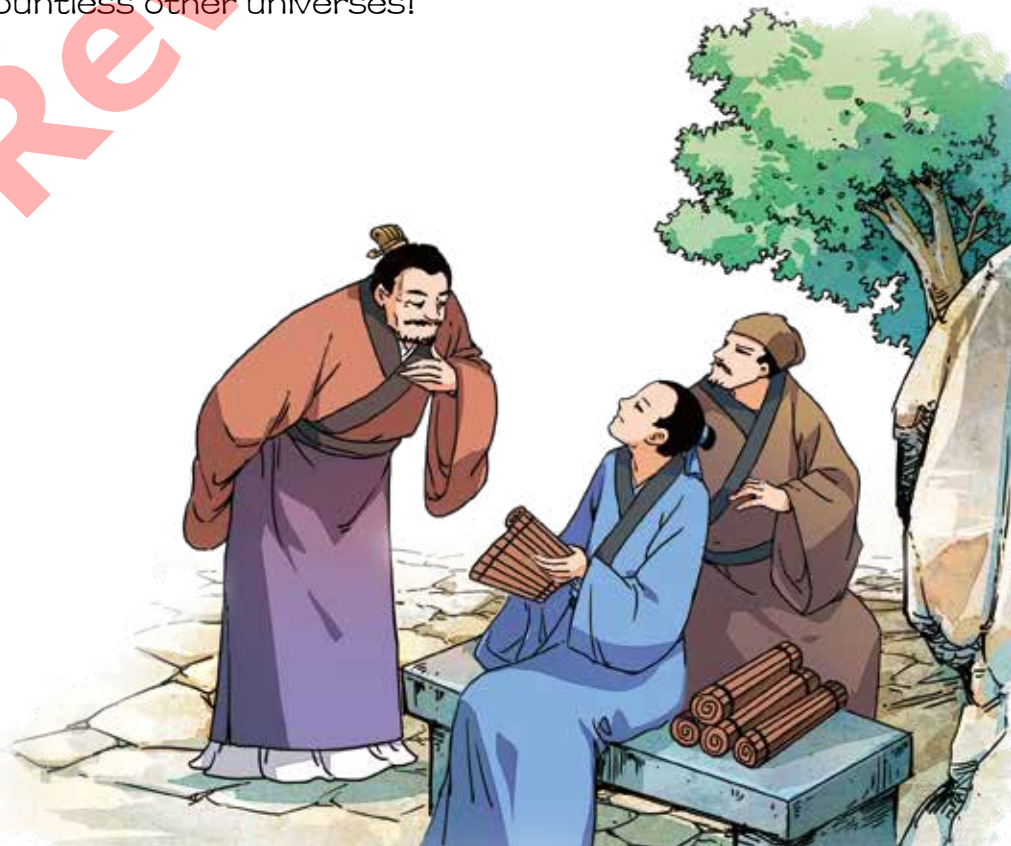
What made Zhang Heng so surprised when he was looking at the sky one evening?



At that time,
most people
believed in the
'Canopy Theory'
(蓋天說), which
said the sky was
like a giant round
hat covering the
earth.



But Zhang Heng
supported a
different idea called the 'Huntian (Celestial Sphere) Theory'. He
thought the sky was like the shell of an egg, wrapping around the
earth, which was the yolk. He even believed that beyond the
shell, there were countless other universes!



At the age of sixteen, Zhang Heng set off on a journey to study and learn. He visited famous places in Chang'an, climbed tall mountains, and explored ancient sites. He learnt the local customs and cultures. These experiences inspired his later writings, such as 'The Ode to the Hot Springs' (《溫泉賦》) and 'The Two Capitals' (《二京賦》).

