Shortly, after raising himself emperor in 9 B.C., Wang Mang, the founder of the Han Dynasty, took drastic measures to reverse the trend of many centuries and started a series of reforms.

**The Reforms of Wang Mang**

Since the first Han Emperor, Kao Tsu, established his empire in 206 B.C., effective measures were taken to rehabilitate the economy by encouraging agriculture. As a result of these measures, agriculture began to prosper and commercial activities were greatly increased.

During the reign of the energetic Emperor Han Wu Ti (140 B.C.-87 B.C.) a number of fiscal and economic experiments were carried out and the culture reached a high point of development. Besides, by launching military attacks on neighbouring nations, the territory of the Han Empire was substantially extended. In short, by the time of Wu Ti, the Celestial Empire reached its zenith. However, after his death, a succession of mediocre and imbecile monarchs came to the throne, which led their maternal and conjugal relatives to fight for the control of the state.

Owing to the massive wars by Wu Ti, the imperial treasury was depleted and the granaries were emptied. Thus, taxes were high and requisitions were numerous. Furthermore, the occupation of land in the hands of a limited class of land-owners rose steeply. Naturally, this phenomenon of land-grabbing often made tenants in debt or wound up as slaves. Needless to say, such a sharp contrast between the extremely rich and the very poor created serious problems. All in all, the deterioration continued until the throne was eventually usurped by Wang Mang, a nephew of one of the empresses.
Shortly, after making himself emperor in 9 A.D., Wang Mang, the founder of the Hsin dynasty, took drastic measures to reverse the trend of many centuries and started a series of irritative reforms in political, social, and economic aspects. They involved the alteration of existing governmental position system, the removal of King titles of the former royal family and of the barbarians, the abolition of slavery and private property in land, the creation of a new and uniform currency, the attempt to control prices and the assessment of new taxes, etc.

The motives behind these reforms were to solve many social and economic problems as well as to fill the imperial exchequer and to consolidate the central power. Unfortunately, they never achieved the results that Wang Mang had hoped. Instead, the outcome of the implementation was confusion and anarchy. The farmers whom the reforms were supposed to benefit suffered with the rest of the population. The wealthy and powerful were almost all against it.

As the condition of peasants became more and more intolerable and the economic situation proved more lamentable than ever, natural calamities aggravated the general distress. To distract popular attention from the troubles at home, Wang Mang carried out numerous military expeditions. This caused the difficulties at home to grow even worse. When he finally realized the futility and called an end to the whole reform program, a series of rebellions ensued. It was this rebel force which overthrew the shortlived Hsin dynasty. His regime collapsed when he was killed in A.D. 23, and he earned the unflattering appellation "The Usurper".