

# THE SHANG DYNASTY

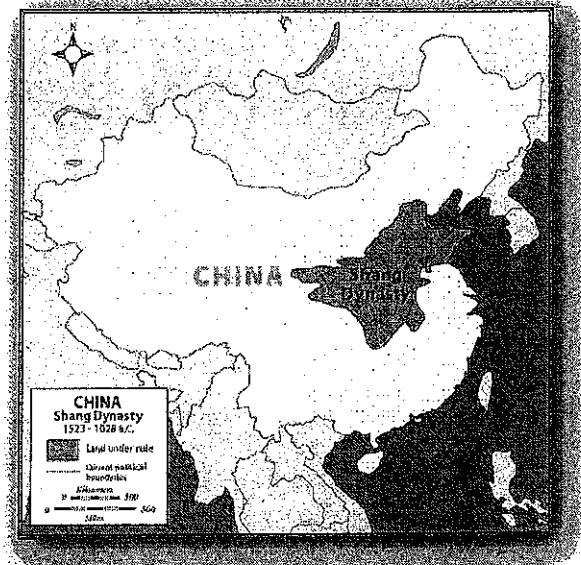
The Shang Dynasty ruled over China from 1600 BCE to around 1046 BCE. Succeeding the Xia, the Shang Dynasty is considered by a variety of sources to be China's second dynasty. The Shang ruled in the Yellow River Valley river, located in the central and eastern areas of China Proper. China's second dynasty was founded by their first king, Tang, by leading a rebellion that overthrew the last Xia ruler in the Battle of Mingtiao.

The Shang were able to defeat their Xia overlords by using a unique style of military: they were some of the first to implement an infantry to attack their enemies. Armed with a variety of stone and bronze weapons, such as spears, axes, bows and arrows, and bronze helmets, Shang warriors were difficult to handle from horseback.

It was during the Shang dynasty that bronze working became common. Along with discovering a variety of bronze weapons, tools, and ships, today archaeologists have discovered bronze vessels for drinking, remnants of bronze chariots, and even bronze hairpins likely worn by the Shang elite. Too, tombs of Shang kings were adorned with a variety of bronze objects. This is proof that the Shang dynasty prospered during the Bronze Age.

The Shang Dynasty is remembered for many grand achievements, such as producing some of the earliest forms of glazed pottery found on earth. Too, the Shang developed a very intricate writing system and left many examples of their text carved on bone and bronze items. Also, the Shang astronomers were able to determine the correct year length - 365 and 1/4 days!

Living in the heart of the Bronze Age, the Shang people experienced a time of cutting-edge equipment. Yet, their way of life still was still very ancient. The Shang had around 13.5 million people and nearly all of them survived as wandering nomads. Eventually, the Shang created more permanent settlements and learned harness their unforgiving terrain. Frequent floods by the Huang



Ho (Yellow River) and the Yangze River (Long River) led the Shang to create very complex systems or irrigation to reroute water to nearby crops. In this, the Shang were able to farm wheat, rice, millet, and barely.

The three major philosophies of ancient China - Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism - were not born when the Shang Dynasty ruled. However, the Shang people were still very religious. Their religion was based heavily on ancestor worship. The Shang believed strongly in honoring their ancestors, and they believed their commitment to this would be reflected in the success or failure of their crops each year. Successful crop seasons meant the ancestors were pleased, while a season plagued by drought or excessive flooding meant the ancestor were not pleased.

The Shang Dynasty fell around the year 1046 BCE in large part because of a very oppressive government. The final king of the Shang Dynasty, Shang Xin, was known for implementing cruel laws, torturing prisoners, and exploiting commoners. Eventually, the people fought back against the king. Some stories tell of Xin committing suicide after his army betrayed him, while others say he was ousted by a rival group. Either way, the Shang Dynasty was quickly replaced by the invading Zhou Dynasty.

# The Zhou Dynasty

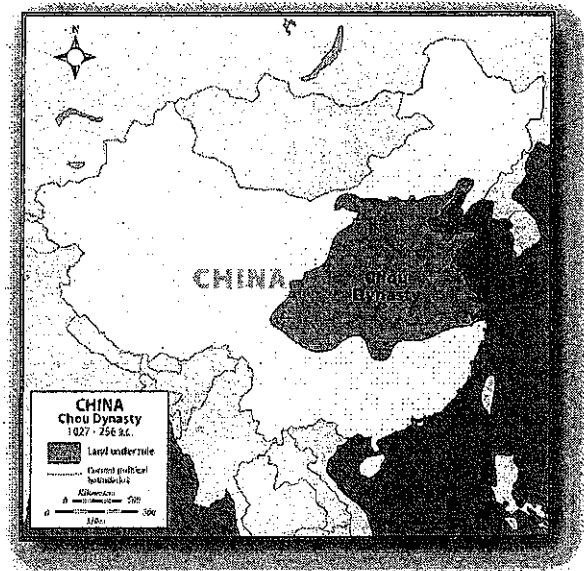
The Zhou Dynasty, also known as the Chou Dynasty, replaced the Shang and ruled over China from around 1046 BCE to 256 BCE. The Zhou dynasty actually developed alongside the Shang and both groups peacefully coexisted for many years. However, as a series of corrupt kings inherited the Shang throne, the people slowly turned away from their leaders and turned toward the Zhou for protection. At the Battle of Muze in 1046 BCE, Zhou leaders invaded the Shang capital of Yin. Most Shang people, tired of their cruel leaders, rose up to support the Zhou. This victory led to the establishment of the longest-running dynasty in Chinese history, the Zhou Dynasty.

Other than the crumbling rule of the Shang, the Zhou were able to easily defeat their predecessor because of their strong military. The Zhou army was split into two major sections, "the Six Armies of the west" and "the Eight Armies of Chengzhou." These armies frequently roamed the countryside, keeping the Zhou people and their land protected. Zhou kings were true leaders of their military; they often accompanied their men to battle.

It was during the Zhou dynasty that China entered its Iron Age. While bronze was still heavily used in the early years of the dynasty, by 600 BCE the greater strength and durability of iron instantly became popular. Iron-tipped plows made farming more efficient and greatly increased crop yields. Too, iron-bladed tomahawks, swords, armor, and helmets became very popular among the military.

The Zhou Dynasty is remembered for many advancements and achievements, such as the invention of the compass and the popular children's toy, the kite. Like the Shang before them, the Zhou created intricate irrigation systems that helped supply crops with water. Zhou historians created some of the first geographical maps of China. Primarily a farming civilization, the Zhou understood the importance of fertilizer to improve crop yields. They also experimented with herbal pesticides to keep away bugs and animals.

The Zhou also created the Mandate of Heaven, the



idea that the emperor was handpicked by God. Heaven would bless the authority of a good ruler, however natural disasters or famines were often signs that God was losing confidence in the emperor. This would lead to the overthrow of that ruler, the mandate would then be passed to a new ruler, and the cycle would continue.

The greatest achievement during the Zhou Dynasty was by accident. China was in such disarray toward the end of the Zhou period that philosophers sought ways to create a peaceful society. Confucius taught that people needed to have proper morals and show respect to their ancestors. Laozi expressed the idea that everything in the world is connected and is always in a constant state of balance. Finally, Legalism taught that people were naturally evil, and the only way to create a peaceful society was through strict laws and harsh punishments.

The Zhou Dynasty fell in 256 BCE to the state of Qin, one of the territories of the Zhou Dynasty. By the 4th century BCE, the Qin state had reformed their government based on the teachings of Hanfeizi, the founder of Legalism. According to the philosophy, the Qin posted its laws, enforced them with harsh punishments, and did not make exceptions for anyone. This strong government led to the Qin becoming more powerful than the Zhou, and by 256 BCE the Qin established their rule throughout China.

| <b>Dynasty,<br/>time period,<br/>&amp; "Age"</b> | <b>What was the reason<br/>for their rise to power!</b> | <b>Inventions, Achievements, &amp; Discoveries</b> | <b>What was the reason<br/>for their decline!</b> |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>SHANG</b><br><br>_____<br><br>_____           |   |  |   |
| <b>Zhou</b><br><br>_____<br><br>_____            |   |  |   |
| <b>QIN</b><br><br>_____<br><br>_____             |   |  |   |
| <b>Han</b><br><br>_____<br><br>_____             |   |  |   |

