

Ancient China

DYNASTIES

XIN

(2070 BCE - 1600 BCE)



SHANG

(1600 BCE - 1046 BCE)



ZHOU

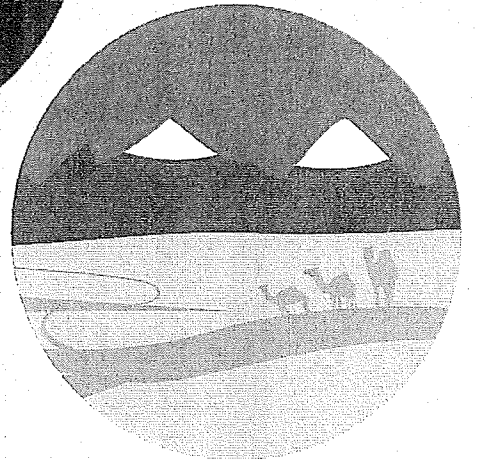
(1046 BCE - 256 BCE)



Warring States Period

QIN

(221 BCE - 206 BCE)



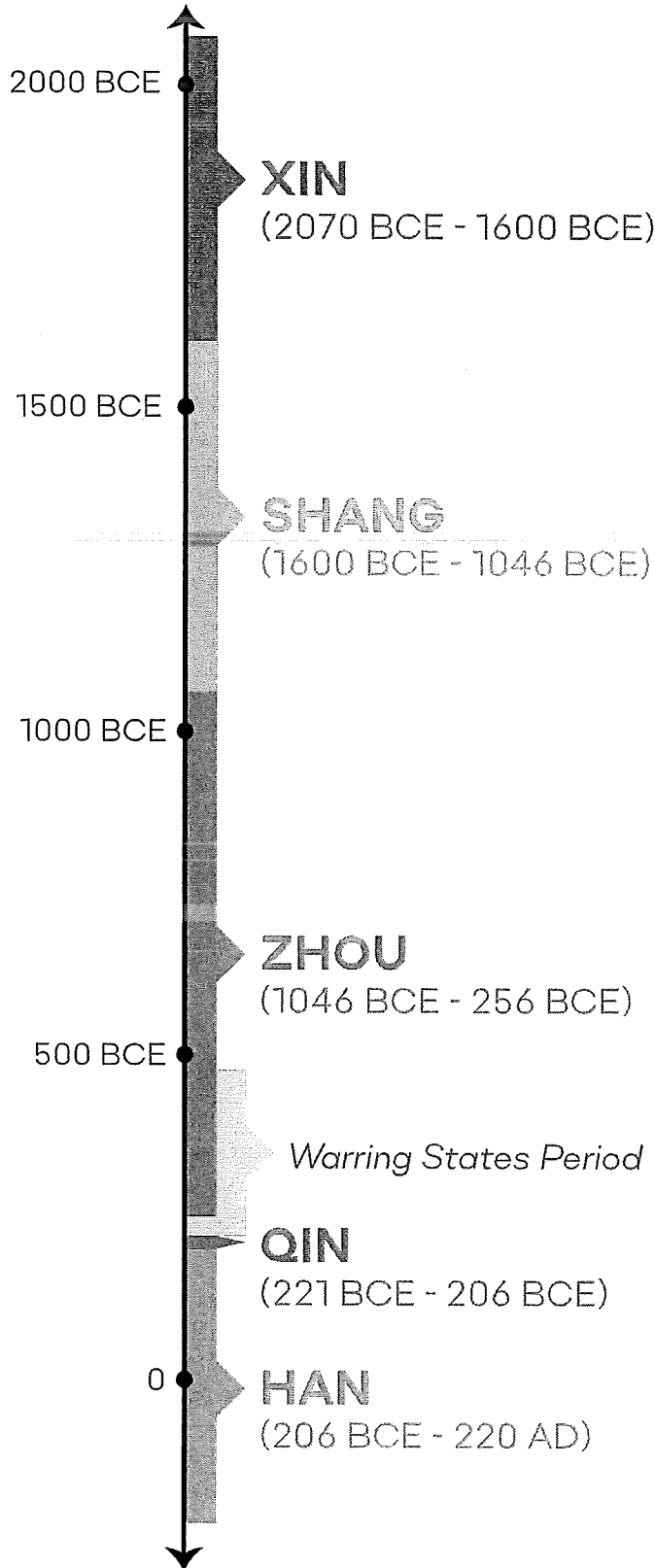
HAN

(206 BCE - 220 AD)

PRIMARY

TOPIC
SHOP

THE ANCIENT DYNASTIES



DYNASTIES

A dynasty is a series of rulers from the same family. For example, every ruler from the Shang Dynasty was related to Cheng Tang, the first ruler of the Shang Dynasty. Usually, the throne would pass from the ruler to his son.

Dynasties ruled China for most of Chinese history, all the way from 2070 BCE to 1912 AD. During this time, there were 13 different dynasties.

TIME PERIODS

Historical time periods of Ancient China are often named after the dynasty that ruled it. For example, if you said the Great Wall of China was **extended** during the Han Dynasty, that means it was extending during the time China was ruled by a member of the Han Dynasty.

MANDATE OF HEAVEN

The Mandate of Heaven was philosophical idea about an emperor's right to rule.

According to the Mandate of Heaven, there could only be one ruler and no one dynasty can rule forever. If a ruler was **incompetent** or **corrupt**, they would lose the Mandate of Heaven. This could cause floods, famine, and **peasant** uprisings. If a dynasty was overthrown by a rebel, it meant the rebel had the approval of heaven, to rule China.

This idea was introduced during the Zhou Dynasty to **legitimize** their rule after they overthrew the Shang Dynasty. According to the Zhou, they were only able to overthrow the Shang because the Shang emperor was corrupt.

XIN DYNASTY

2070 - 1600 BCE

Some **historians** think The Xin (*Shah*) Dynasty is a legendary dynasty, rather than a historical one. There is evidence of villages in China during this time, but are no records proving that they were united under one ruler. However, there are stories about dynasties in this time period. According to legend, the dynasty was founded by a man named Yu the Great or Yu the Engineer. He lived from 2123 BCE to 2025 BCE. Yu came up with a way to controlling the flooding of the Yellow river and his son grew up to become emperor.

SHANG DYNASTY

1600 BCE - 1046 BCE

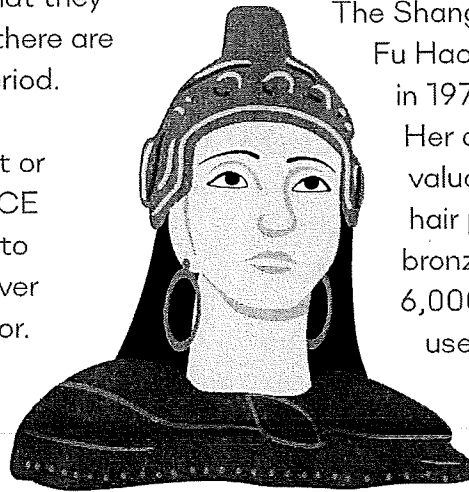
The Shang (*Shang*) Dynasty is the earliest recorded dynasty in Chinese history. They ruled in the middle and lower Yellow River valley between 1600 BCE and 1050 BCE, the same time as pharaohs ruled Egypt.

Like the Egyptians, the Shang people developed many **innovations**. The oldest evidence of Chinese writing comes from the Shang dynasty. The Shang used math, developed a twelve-month calendar and tracked solar eclipses. The Shang were known for their impressive work with bronze, an **alloy** made from copper and tin. They also created art from ceramics.

The Shang used weapons made of bronze and stone, including spears, long-handled axes similar to halberds. The protected themselves with bronze or leather helmets. Archers used bow made from a combination of animal horn or bone and wood. In warfare, Shang archers would shoot arrows from a moving horse-drawn chariot.

People of the Shang dynasty worshiped their ancestors and a god called Shangdi, the supreme ancestor.

The language the Shang spoke was an early form of modern Chinese. Historians have learned a lot about the Shang from the carvings on oracle bones that were used to **consult** ancestors. The writing carved into these bones shows they had a **complex** language.



The Shang tomb of a king's wife, Fu Hao, was discovered intact in 1976 in the ruins of Yinxu. Her coffin was surrounded by valuable jade figurines, pottery, hair pins, mirrors of polished bronze, jewelry and more than 6,000 cowrie shells (which were used as money in the Shang Dynasty). The bones of 16 sacrificed humans and six dogs were buried in her tomb to serve her in the afterlife.

ZHOU DYNASTY

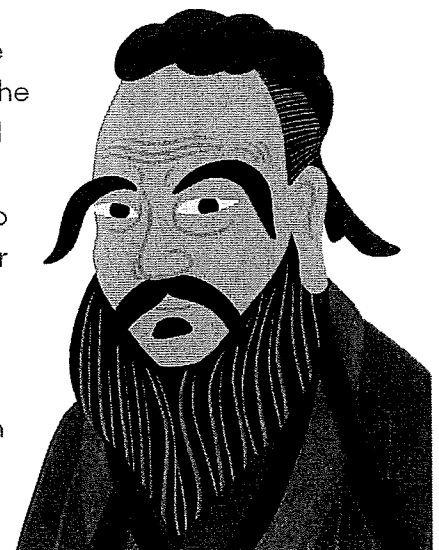
1046 BCE - 256 BCE

The Zhou (*Jou*) dynasty was the longest dynasty, lasting almost 8 centuries.

The Zhou existed at the same time as the Shang, but they overthrew the Shang Dynasty around 1050 BCE.

The Zhou continued developing the innovations of the Shang including the use of bronze and Chinese writing, and they came up with some of their own innovations, like coins and chopsticks.

The period known as the Hundred Schools of



Thought took place during the Zhou Dynasty, a time when famous philosophers like Confucius (the founder of Confucianism), Lao-Tzu (the founder of Taoism) and Sun Tzu (the writer of The Art of War) lived and wrote.

It was the Zhou who came up with the idea of heaven, and the Mandate of Heaven. This helped them justify the overthrow of the Shang. The Zhou dynasty became so big, that the king had to send his relatives to rule different states. These rulers were called nobles. In this feudal system, the nobles were supposed to submit to the king. Eventually, the city-states began fighting with each other, a period called the Warring States Period (476 BCE - 221 BCE).

QIN DYNASTY (221 BCE - 206 BCE)

In 221 BCE, Qin Shi Huang (*Chin Shee Hwahng*) became the first emperor of China after he conquered and united the seven warring states. At the time, people in different states had various ways of writing, measuring objects, and running their governments, but Qin Shi Huang **standardized** all these things. He also took down walls that once separated kingdoms, and extended others, making one wall, now known as the Great Wall of China.

During the Qin (*Chin*) Dynasty, the emperor, Qin Shi Huang, wanted to **unify** Chinese philosophy with the ideas of Legalism.

He ordered all texts from the other schools of philosophy to be burned.

Qin Shi Huang died in 210 BCE. He was buried in a large tomb complex, protected by an army of over 8,000 clay soldiers, known as the Terracotta Army. His son became emperor but the people revolted and the empire ended shortly afterwards. This was the shortest dynasty, only lasting 15 years.

HAN DYNASTY (206 BCE - 220 AD)

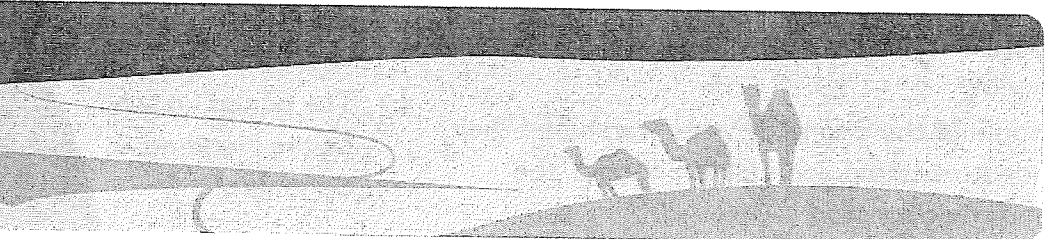
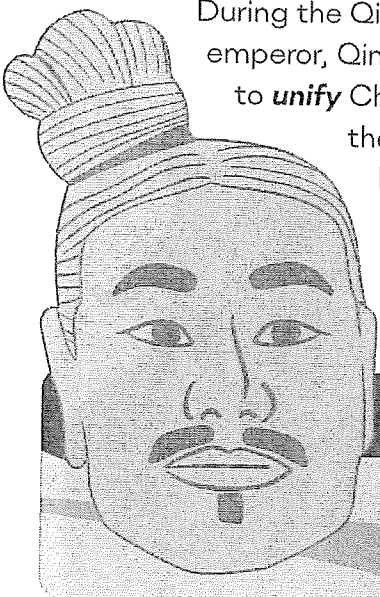
The Han (*Han*) dynasty was a **stable** period of Ancient Chinese history.

During the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu sent an emissary named Zhang Qian to the West to find **allies** to fight against an enemy. When the Qian returned, he told the emperor stories of **superior** horses in the West. The Han Emperor opened up a trade route between China and the west in order to trade silk for these horses, which he bred for his cavalry and used to defeat his enemies. This trading route became known as the Silk Road.

Paper and porcelain were invented during the Han Dynasty and introduced to the West along the Silk Road.

The first Chinese dictionary was put together, including characters from the Zhou and Shang Dynasties, and the historian Sima Qian wrote a history of China. Confucian texts that had been hidden during the Qin Dynasty were rounded up. Confucian ideas were developed and Confucianism became official imperial philosophy.

The Han Dynasty fell in 220 CE, followed by the Six Dynasties Period, a time of instability and warfare, which lasted until 581 CE.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1 What is a dynasty?

2 What was the Mandate of Heaven?

3 According to legend, who was the first ruler of the Xin Dynasty and what did he do?

4 How do historians know the Shang had a complex language?

5 Name three philosophers from the Zhou Dynasty.

6 How did Qin Shi Huang become the first emperor of China?

7 Name two inventions from the Han Dynasty that were introduced to the West.

8 What changes took place in China after the fall of the Qin Dynasty?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1 How many dynasties were there in the history of China?

(A) 5 (B) 13
(C) 25 (D) 82

2 Which of the following statements is true according to the Mandate of Heaven.

(A) The Zhou dynasty must rule forever
(B) Floods were caused by peasant uprisings
(C) If a ruler was corrupt or incompetent, they would lose the Mandate of Heaven
(D) A dynasty could never be overthrown

3 Which dynasty has no records proving they were united under one ruler?

(A) Shang (B) Xin
(C) Han (D) Qin

4 What was the Shang Dynasty known for?

(A) Their work with bronze (B) The invention of paper
(C) The Hundred Schools of Thought (D) The unification of China

5 How many centuries did the Zhou Dynasty last?

(A) 1 (B) 3
(C) 5 (D) 8

6 Which Dynasty unified China but only lasted 15 years?

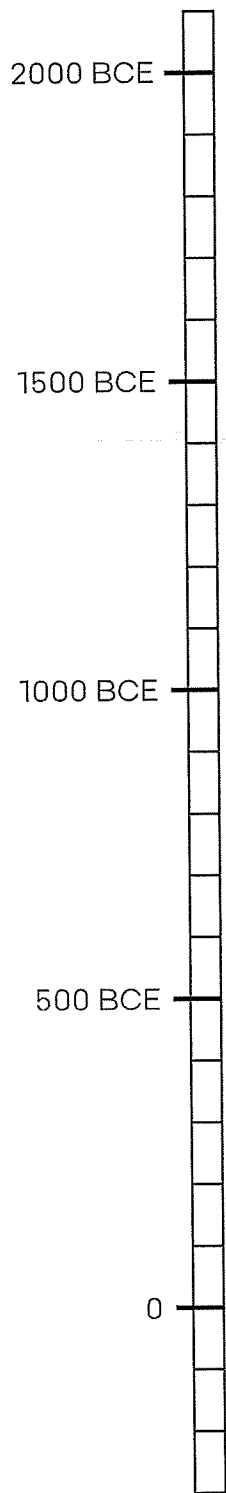
(A) Shang (B) Xin
(C) Han (D) Qin

7 Confucianism was the official imperial philosophy of which dynasty?

(A) Zhou (B) Xin
(C) Han (D) Qin

FILL IN THE TIMELINE

Color in the timeline to show the five Ancient Chinese Dynasties. Color the Xin Dynasty purple, the Shang Dynasty orange, the Zhou Dynasty blue, the Qin Dynasty red and the Han Dynasty green. Beside the timeline, write in the years each dynasty reigned and one fact about each dynasty.



FACT FILE

Do some research and create a fact file for your favorite Ancient Chinese Dynasty.

Name:

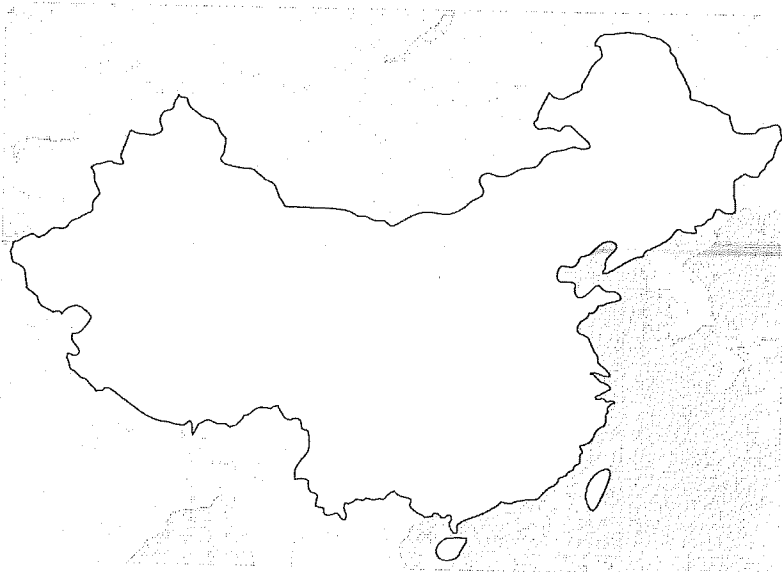
Length of Dynasty:

Year Range:

Founding Emperor:

Capital City:

Draw the borders of the territory controlled by the dynasty:



Notable Events:

Famous Characters: