

THE SHANG DYNASTY

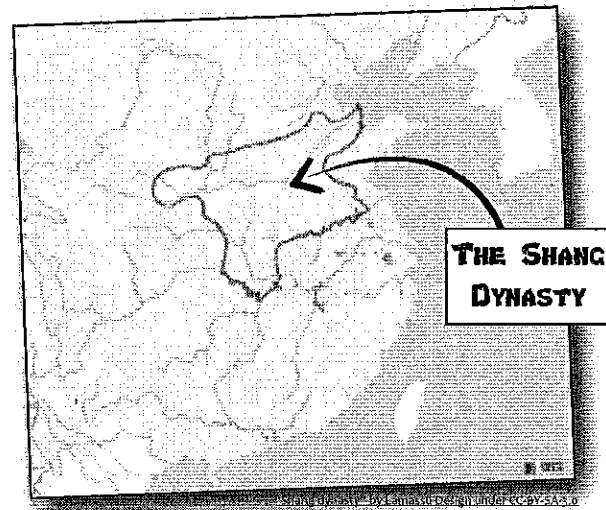
The Shang dynasty ruled over China from 1600 BCE to around 1046 BCE. Succeeding the Xia, the Shang dynasty is considered by a variety of sources to be China's second dynasty. The Shang ruled in the Yellow River Valley located in the central and eastern areas of China Proper. China's second dynasty was 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 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 to 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 irrigation systems that rerouted water to nearby crops. In this, the Shang were able to farm wheat, rice, millet, and barley.

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 ancestors 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

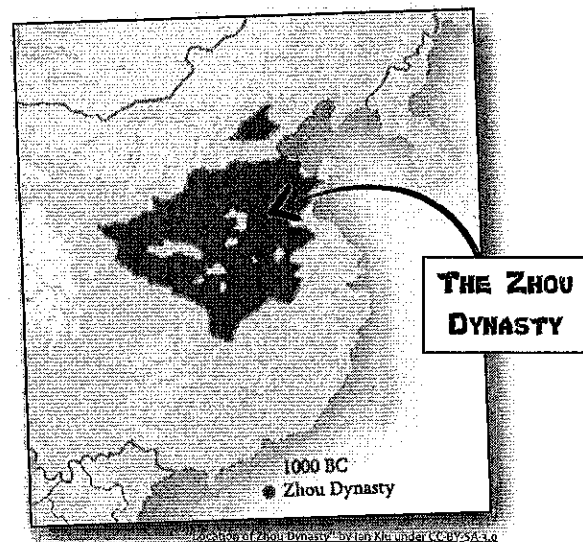
The Zhou dynasty, also known as the Chou dynasty, replaced the Shang and ruled over China from around 1046 BCE to 256 BCE. The Zhou dynasty actually developed alongside the Shang and both groups peacefully coexisted for many years. However, as a series of corrupt kings inherited the Shang throne, the people slowly turned away from their leaders and turned toward the Zhou for protection. At the Battle of Muve 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.

Along with the crumbling Shang infrastructure, the Zhou were able to easily defeat their predecessor because of their superior 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 as they often accompanied their men into 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 helped it become 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 viewed as 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 was connected and always in balance. Finally, Legalism taught that people were self-motivated and would naturally do bad things; to him, 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.

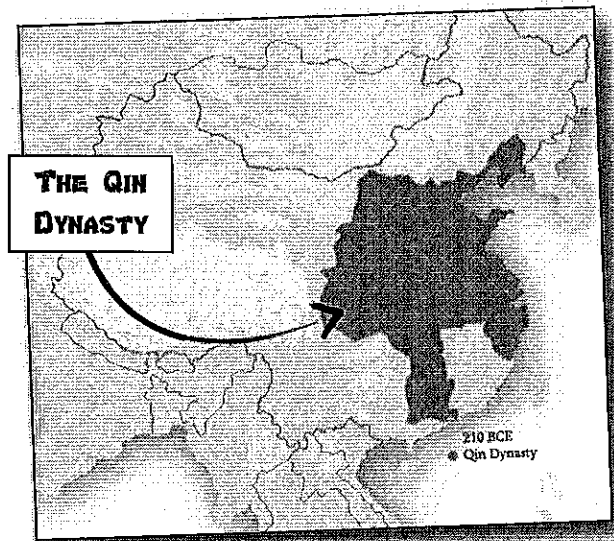
THE QIN DYNASTY

The Qin dynasty, also known as the Ch'in dynasty, replaced the Zhou and ruled over China for only fourteen years, from 221 BCE to 207 BCE. The Qin dynasty actually developed as a state within the Zhou dynasty, starting in the 4th century BCE. Slowly, the Qin reformed its government, economy, and legal code to model the recommendations of the philosopher, Hanfeizi, the father of Legalism. The Qin government posted their laws in plain view for all citizens to see, enforced very harsh punishments to those who dared break the law, and made exceptions for no one. Soon, the Qin state grew very powerful and in 221 BCE officially seized power from Zhou rulers.

The Qin dynasty only had one ruler, Emperor Qin, and he is often remembered for his tyrannic and cruel nature. However, while greatly feared by his people, Emperor Qin is the reason the Qin dynasty was able to supplant the Zhou. Late in the Zhou period the people lacked effective leadership. Everyday life had become extremely dysfunctional; crime rates were high and battles frequently broke out among ruling families over who had the true "mandate" to rule. The Qin state brought stability to China when it needed it the most.

Like the Zhou dynasty before it, the Qin enjoyed the use of iron goods, however now they became stronger and even more durable. Since the Qin only lasted for a little over a decade, there was not much time for the dynasty to develop its own style of weaponry. Therefore, the Qin used much of the same technology available to the Zhou. Soldiers of the Qin dynasty used iron swords and daggers, as well as armor, helmets, and armor guards for their horses.

The Qin dynasty is remembered for many advancements and achievements, such as creating a standard for Chinese writing and currency. Before the Qin, a variety of different languages and forms of coinage were found throughout China. Now, China became much more unified with only one form of communication and one type of currency. The Qin is also famous for its extensive network of roads and canals that helped the provinces communicate more effectively.



"Location of Qin Dynasty." By Jan Klu under CC-BY-SA 3.0

However, the greatest achievement of the Qin dynasty was the construction of the Great Wall of China. During Emperor Qin's reign he faced constant threat from the invading Xiongnu people (Mongols) to the north. The invading Mongols were seizing land in the Yellow River Valley and Qin was determined to put an end to it, so he sent over one million laborers to build a wall in northern China. This project was built mainly by common people and criminals through forced labor; the wall would take nine years to complete as they constantly had to battle Mongols during construction. However, the Great Wall that we see today was not entirely built by Emperor Qin; he is only responsible for a smaller section that is actually south of the current wall.

The downfall of the Qin dynasty is directly linked to the downfall of their one and only emperor. Despite uniting China, most people of China hated Emperor Qin. Their ruler burned books, lived a lavish lifestyle, and followed a very strict Legalist code. As the emperor aged he became paranoid about death. He hired doctors and scientists to make a variety of medicines that the emperor hoped would make him immortal. Many of the medicines contained mercury, a metal that is very toxic. Eventually, Emperor Qin lost his mind. He even ordered his tomb be surrounded by soldiers made of terra cotta; these clay soldiers would guard him for all of eternity. China fell into chaos upon the death of Emperor Qin in 210 BCE. A brief rebellion resulted in the Han dynasty seizing power.

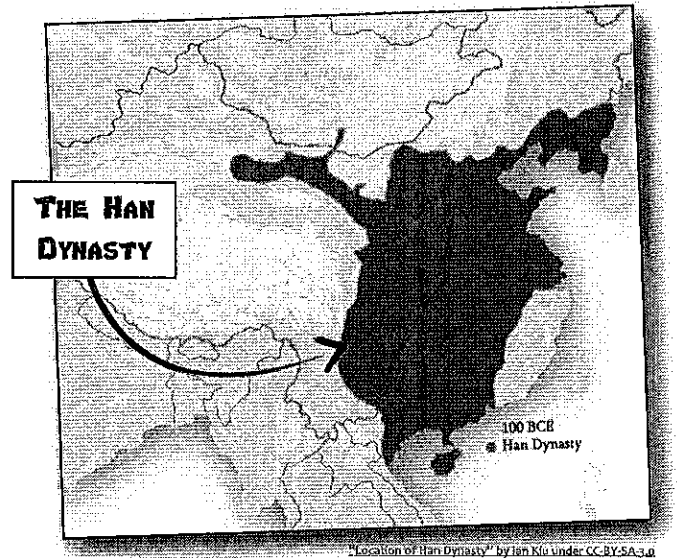
The Han Dynasty

The Han dynasty replaced the Qin and ruled over China for 426 years, from 206 BCE to 220 CE. This dynasty ruled over an extremely vast territory, stretching much further into the south and west than any other previous dynasty. Today, most Chinese live within the boundaries of the once-great Han Dynasty. In fact, 92% of all Chinese people today consider themselves part of the "Han people." This is also seen in the Chinese language: most is made up of what is called "Han characters." While it had its missteps, the Han dynasty is often referred to as the greatest period of Chinese history.

The Han dynasty seized control of China following the death of Emperor Qin. However, it was not clear who would be its first emperor. Two leaders within the Han eventually warred over who would rule the dynasty: Liu Bang and Xiang Yu. At the Battle of Gaixia, Liu Bang emerged victorious and assumed the title of emperor. Today, he is also referred to as Emperor Gaozu. His first challenge as emperor was to end the Mongol invasions that plagued the Qin. Gaozu's plan was three fold: continue work on the Great Wall and choose families through a lottery system to move to the northern border. The hope was that this settlement would discourage the Mongols from invading. The third option was to negotiate a deal with the Mongols: the Han would offer silk in exchange for peace.

Like the Zhou and Qin dynasties before it, the Han also enjoyed the use of iron goods, however now they also began to experiment with steel. Today, many Han artifacts have been recovered that help us learn more about the Han military. Weapons of the Han dynasty consisted mainly of knives, swords, spears, battle-axes, and halberds. Han cavalry members also enjoyed the use of a revamped and more effective crossbow. Armor was provided for all of the horses in the Han cavalry instead of only those ridden by the generals, as was done in the Qin dynasty.

The Han dynasty is remembered for many advancements and achievements, such as creating one of the first forms of paper. This paper was much thicker than what is found today and was made of bark, hemp, and wheat stalks. Also, Han scientists experimented with a new method of



relieving pain and mental stress known as acupuncture. Too, the Han understood many advanced scientific concepts: they created a seismograph to measure the strength of earthquakes and were the first to launch a hot air balloon. While introducing these high-tech ideas, the Han also created many simple tools, such as the wheelbarrow, glazed pottery, stirrups for a horse saddle, and were among the first to create weaved clothing.

However, the greatest achievement of the Han dynasty was in its transformation of government. Prior to the Han, emperors routinely gave government positions to friends and family members. For example, it was common for an emperor to name his nephew as governor of one of China's provinces. The quality of China's government personnel became very lackluster; corruption was common and leaders were incompetent. Embracing the Confucian teachings of the time, the Han implemented a rigorous civil service exam that all government workers had to pass. Instead of being chosen through special or inherited privileges, prospective applicants would now be chosen based on their abilities.

The downfall of the Han dynasty occurred in the early 3rd century as a result of taxation. Many wealthy landowners evaded paying taxes on their land and this resulted in the lower classes taking on the burden. Soon, the people revolted and the empire fractured into three distinct sections. The "Three Kingdoms" period would mark the next sixty years, and would forever be known as the bloodiest time in Chinese history.

Dynasty, time period, & "Age"	What was the reason for their rise to power!	Inventions, Achievements, & Discoveries	What was the reason for their decline!
SHANG _____			
Zhou _____			
QIN _____			
Han _____			