

Dynasties of Ancient China

Shang Dynasty

The Shang dynasty began between 1760 BCE and 1500 BCE. The exact year is not known. To gain power, the Shang defeated the Xia people to create China's First Dynasty. The way of life for the Shang included rice, raising animals and producing cloth such as flax and silk. During the Shang dynasty, the Bronze Age was a time when many things were made such as tools, weapons, cups, etc. This greatly improved the farming methods, living conditions, and warfare. Tools made out of bronze are much better than tools made out of bones or branches. To predict the future, the Shang used Oracle Bones. On these oracle bones, the Shang would write questions such as what crops to plant, when to travel, and when to hunt. The questions the Shang put on these oracle bones were questions they wanted to know the answers to help them in their daily lives. After the questions were written on the bones, they were heated. Then the bones were examined for cracks. These cracks were used to predict the future. Under the Shang dynasty, the first Written Records were recorded. Also, the Shang discovered Mars. Pretty cool, huh.

Zhou Dynasty

As the Zhou people moved east, they came into contact with the Shang Dynasty. The Zhou people thought they were the best and wanted to be the new dynasty. In 1150 BCE, Zhou defeated Shang in a huge battle that lasted a long time. In 1050 BCE King Wu claimed victory for the Zhou. The Zhou claimed the Mandate of Heaven, which means god wanted them to rule. The result of this battle and Zhou victory was that the Zhou dynasty becomes the second dynasty of China. This dynasty of China was the longest dynasty of China, which lasted 800 years. The Zhou dynasty was broken up into two parts: the western Zhou and the eastern Zhou. In the west, the Zhou farmed things such as beans, wheat, rice, and fruit. Silk was also very important, which women produced. The eastern Zhou was known as the Golden Age because of all the advancements like a new system of money, government projects, more scholars, and the use of iron tools. Not only was the Zhou broken up into east and west, the Zhou also had a division of social class. At the bottom of the social class "pyramid" was the Peasants. Above them were the Nobles and at the top was the King. Each of the three levels would do something for the level above them. Also, each level would do something for the level below them. So actually, all groups were helping each other out. The peasants would farm and serve the nobles. The nobles would provide military service for the king since the Nobles were the ones who controlled the military. The king would give land to the nobles in exchange for protection. The nobles would protect the peasants in exchange for the peasants farming for them. The Zhou declined due to a collapse marked by the beginning of Great Warfare in China.

Qin Dynasty

After the Zhou dynasty fell, the Qin dynasty rose to become China's third dynasty of China. This occurred in 221 BCE. Although the Qin was the third dynasty of China, the Qin dynasty had the very first emperor, which is one guy in charge. The first emperor of China was Shi Huangdi. He united China and was very powerful and cruel. He split his empire into 36 provinces. Despite the fact that Shi Huangdi was very mean and cruel, there were some important accomplishments under his rule. One of those is the Standardization of money, weights, and measurement. The result of Standardization was everyone used the same system, which made Communication better. A big project during the Qin dynasty was the Great Wall of China. This wall connected existing walls that had been built earlier for protection. This wall protected empire from invasion. Shi Huangdi punished anyone who spoke out against China. He controlled what people studied and talked about. The result was many revolts. The Qin dynasty lasted only 20 years. The Qin rejected the teachings of Confucianism, which taught respect and fairness. The type of ruling under the Qin was legalism. Legalism taught people to obey rulers out of fear. If people obeyed the ruler, they were rewarded. If they did not obey the ruler, they were punished. The Qin also built 4,000 miles of road. The Qin burned Zhou and Confucianist books. The end of the Qin came when Shi Huangdi killed himself while trying to live forever. (How ironic) Shi Huangdi's son took over but he was a weak ruler. Civil war broke out and Han defeated all enemies.

Han Dynasty

The people of the Han come into power when Han defeated the Qin dynasty. The result of this victory was Han becomes China's fourth dynasty. The Han dynasty lasted from 206 BCE. Until 220 CE. The first ruler of the Han Dynasty was Gaozu. He lifted the ban on books that the Qin dynasty had imposed. The Han dynasty is considered to be China's great time period in history. The Han makes changes starting with rejecting legalism. The Han established a Confucianism style of rule. Using skills and talents to work in government is called Civil Service. The Han prospered domestically with agriculture, handcrafts, and commerce. The population of China reached 55 million during the Han. The Han also made technological advancements such as paper and the seismograph, which alerts people of an oncoming earthquake. A new religion also emerged called Daoism, or Taoism. The most famous Chinese historian is a guy named Sima Qian. The Silk Road became an enormously important route to trade silk to other parts of the world. The Silk Road was the path caravans would use to export Chinese silk.

Source: <https://mccasland2010.wikispaces.com/file/view/Dynasties+of+Ancient+China.doc>

DYNASTY	DATE	IMPORTANT FIGURES	INVENTIONS & DISCOVERIES
Xia (Hsia)	c.1994- c.1523 B.C.E.	Yu the Great, Huang Di	irrigation & farming, domesticated animals, writing
Shang (Yin)	c.1523- 1111	Fuhao	bronze, oracle bones, calendar
Chou (Zhou)	1111-221	Confucius, Lao-tzu	iron, written laws, money, feudalism
Ch'in (Qin)	221-206	Shi Huangdi	bureaucracy, roads, canals, beginning of the Great Wall
Han	206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.	Wu Ti, Wang Mang	porcelain, paper, Buddhism, Silk Road, encyclopedia (Shiji)
Three Kingdoms	220-280		growth of Taoism
Jin (Tsin or Chin)	265-420		exploration into southeast Asia
Southern & Northern	420-588		wheelbarrow, advances in astronomy and medicine
Sui	581-617	Sui Wen-ti	central government, Great Wall restored, Great Canal built
Tang (T'ang)	618-907	Tai-tsung, Du Fu, Wang Wei	land expansion, civil exams, poetry, sculpture, painting
Five Dynasties	907-960		woodblock printing, printing of paper money
Song (Sung)	960-1279		tea, cotton, gunpowder, growth of Confucianism
Yuan (Yung)	1260-1368	Kublai Khan	playwriting, medical literature, playing cards
Ming	1368-1644		contact with West, architecture and literature flourish
Ch'ing (Qing or Manchu)	1644-1911		further land expansion, restoration of ancient text

Source: <http://www.ushistory.org/civ/9.asp>