

The Shang Dynasty

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Time Period

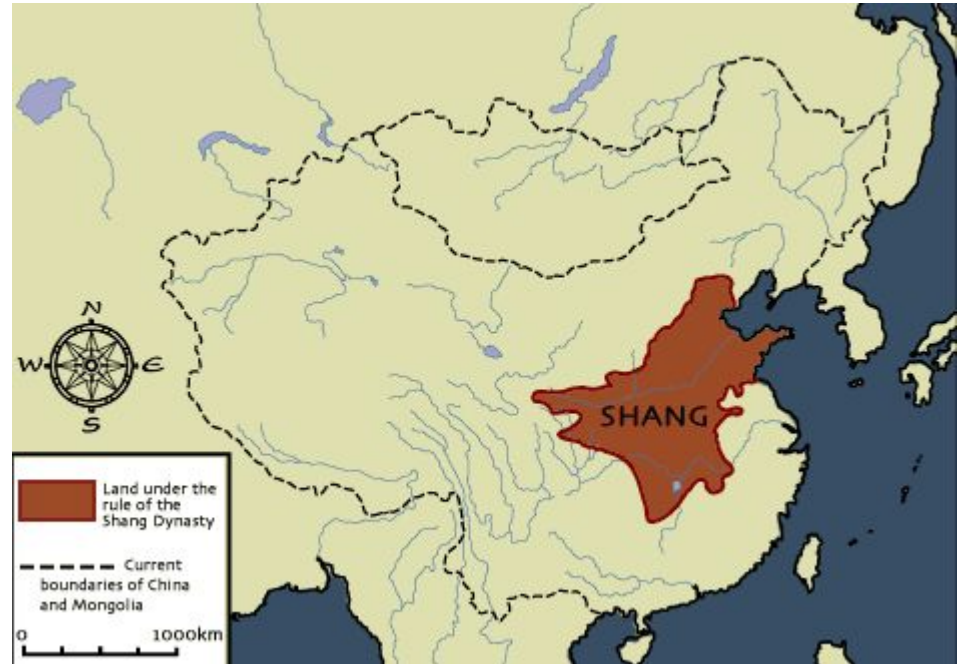
The Shang Dynasty were from 1600 BC- 1046 BC. It took place during the bronze age.

Legend says that a previous dynasty existed before the Shang dynasty called the Xia dynasty. Apparently, the Shang defeated the Xia dynasty and killed the oppressive ruler Jie of Xia. The Shang had 31 kings. The chart below includes the relatives of the kings.



Map of the Shang's Rule

The Shang Dynasty settled in a part of modern day China. As the chart shows, the Shang dynasty's area was only a fraction of modern day China's territory.



Agriculture



The Shang's main source of food was the farming of wheat, millet, barley and rice. They also hunted fox, deer, boar, wild cattle and others.

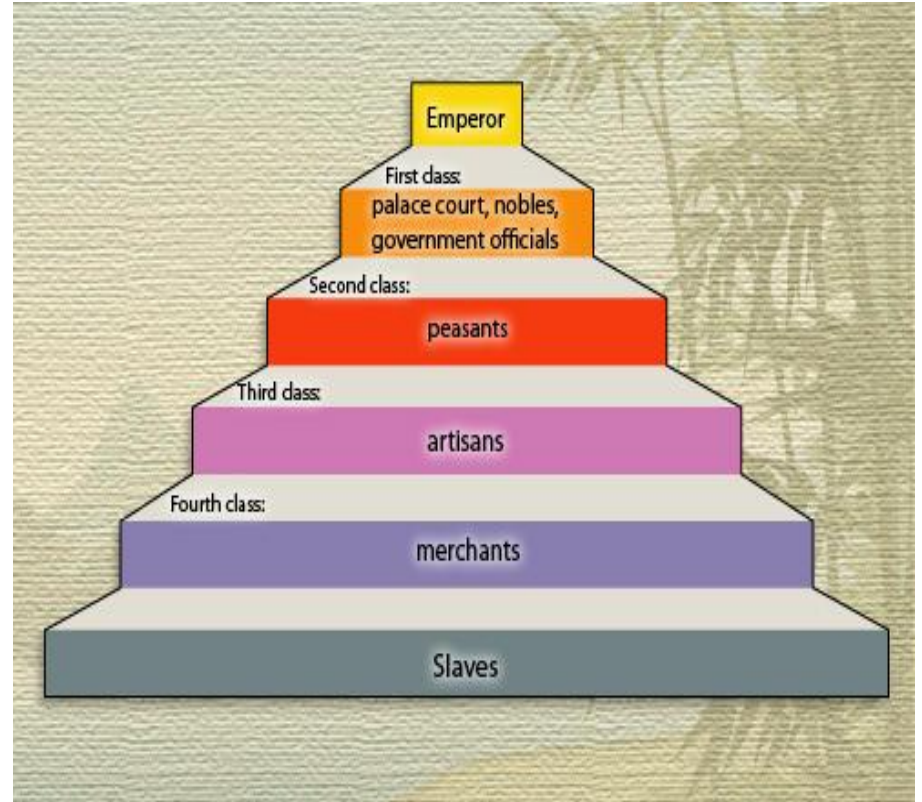
The animals they domesticated included dogs, pigs, sheep, oxen, and silkworms. Diets were based on your social class.

A noble might dine on peacocks and hog, but a peasant would eat cereals and breads made of millet and wheat

Society

The Shang had a pretty simple social pyramid. On the top was the king, then the nobles, then the warriors, then scribes, the farmers, the peasants (almost the same as the farmers) and on the bottom was the slaves.

The Shang kings had more than one wife. One of them had 60 wives! Peasants were forced to work in the fields by the landlords.



Government

The government of the Shang was fairly advanced. They had many levels of leaders starting with the king.

Most of the high level officials were closely related to the king. Warlords often ruled areas of land, but owed allegiance to the king and would provide soldiers during times of war.

The government collected taxes from the people and tributes from surrounding allies.



Art And Architecture

The Shang were skilled in jade, they made a collection of jade sculptures. Their main forms of art were jade and bronze.

They had lots of sacrificial cups for their gods. They also made many carvings of elephants, dragons, and gods. Jade was a very nice looking object, and the Shang's art accounted for much of it.

The architecture then is almost the same now. The buildings had poles on the exterior of the building.



Technology and Inventions

The Shang made musical instruments, the royal ones included drums and many kinds of bells. Some more instruments are: Clay ocarinas, teapots and drums of bronze. They made many of these out of bronze.



Bronze

The Shang Dynasty was during the bronze age. The Shang developed bronze technology. The shang made bronze out of tin and copper.

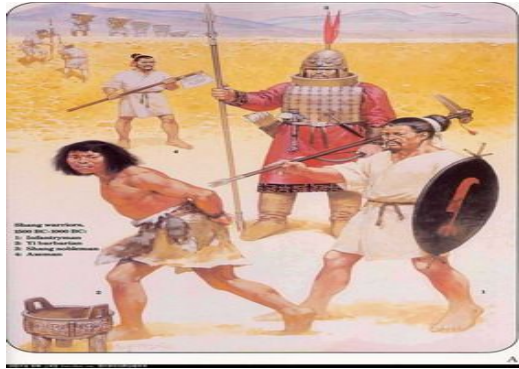
They were the most skilled at it. They were so skilled at it, that they made crafting into an art. They made bronze armor, weapons, ceremonial cups, and art all out of bronze. The Shang loved bronze so much, that they thought that it was worth more than gold!



Slavery

The Shang have little information on slavery. They mainly were prisoners of war that were forced to work in the fields, make roads, or serve in their rich masters houses.

They were the most common sacrifice in burials when the emperor, a noble, or a slave owner died. 5% of the Shang's population were slaves.



Religion

The Shang Dynasty believed in Polytheism (the belief of more than one god.) The main god was named “Shang Di”. The Shang Di was a supreme god. He was the god of the heaven, the universe, and the sky.

They also worshiped their dead ancestors, and sacrificed humans.

The Shang Dynasty believed in life after death. That is why they worshipped their ancestors.



Burials

When a king died, at the burials, it was inevitable for his wives, servants, dogs, and horses to die along with him. Sacrifice ranged from common folk, to nobles.

They had different burials for social classes. If you were a king, expect a grand burying and many sacrifices; but if you're a peasant, you'll probably get thrown down a well!



Chinese Dragons

Chinese dragons traditionally symbolize great power and success powers particularly control over water, rainfall, typhoons, and floods. The dragon is also a symbol of power, strength, and good luck for people. The ruler of China usually used the dragon as a symbol of his imperial power and strength.



Writing

The Shang Dynasty was the first Chinese dynasty with written records. They wrote ancient writing that is similar to modern Chinese script. The Shang Dynasty used symbols or pictures that symbolize different things. The Shang dynasty wrote on oracle bones. We are able to read it today.



Oracle Bone	Old Chinese	meaning	Modern character	Modern Chinese
	*muk *kens	eye to see	目 見	mù jiàn
	*kʰoʔ *men	mouth name	口 名	kǒu míng
	*ŋot *mraŋ	moon bright	月 明	yuè míng
	*ghway *nin	growing grain harvest (> year)	禾 年	hé nián

Oracle Bones

Oracle bones were very common by the Shang Dynasty. They were written on tortoise shells and ox bones. Kings used it, not the common folk. They supposedly told the future. Not the big stuff like: Will I marry someone who is nice?, but a more simple question like: Will it rain tomorrow?



Achievements

The Shang had many achievements. Some of them are: The making of silk, a 365 and 1/4 day calendar, a decimal system, the first Chinese dynasty with 1 unified king, and writing.

They were (or might have been) the first Chinese dynasty. The Shang Dynasty advanced in astrology leading to advancement in math.



Contributions

The Shang Dynasty most significant contribution was writing. We learned about their writing from oracle bones.

The Shang Dynasty developed a good government. The Shang Dynasty had an advancement in bronze technology. The Shang Dynasty also had good weapons for war, like chariots, and bronze weapons.



The Shang's End

They were conquered by the Zhou Dynasty in the battle of Muye. The last king of the Shang was Di Xin. His royal name was Zhou (odd that the next dynasty was named the Zhou dynasty.)



Sources

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The End

Any Questions?

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