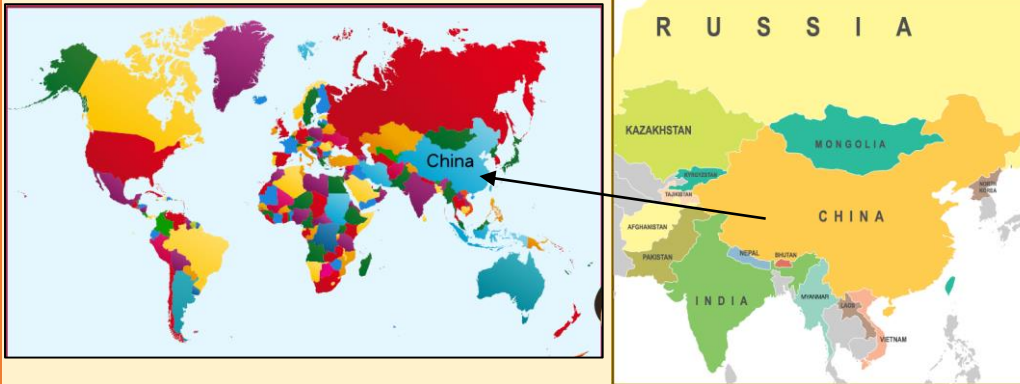


The Shang Dynasty

Where in the world?



Continent: Asia

Capital city: Beijing

China is 9.6 million square kilometres and is the world's most populated country.

China is the largest producer of rice and red meat and a major exporter of corn, peanuts, cotton, tea, silk and coal.

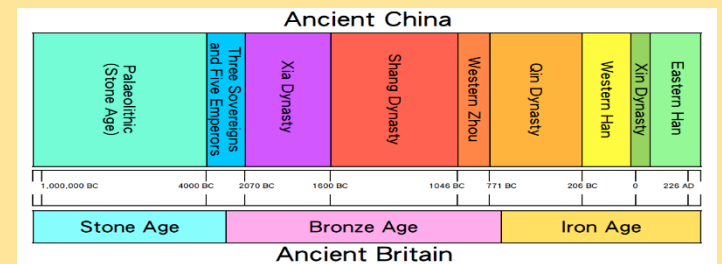
The cities are rich but the rural areas are poorer.

The Himalayas is spread across 4 countries including China. The range includes Mount Everest.

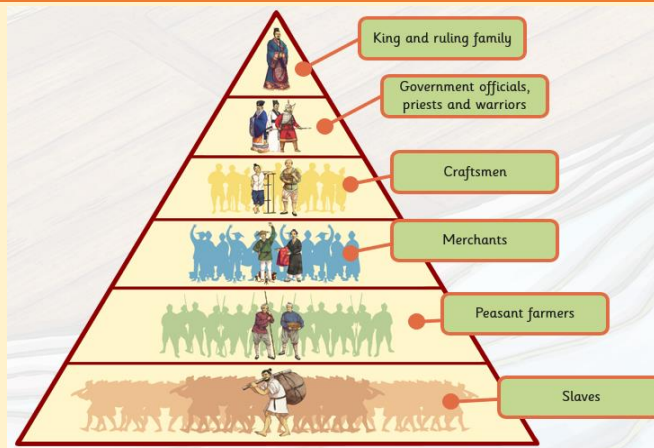
When in history?

The Shang Dynasty ruled during the Bronze Age in Britain.

In 1899, a bone was found from the Shang Dynasty- called an oracle bone- which confirmed the Shang Dynasty existed. They were the first written evidence of any society in ancient China.



How was society organised?



A dynasty is a line of hereditary rulers of a country. A dynasty starts when a ruler takes power. Then, they pass on their kingdom to their children when they die. Unlike the British dynasties, the Shang family passed their power from brother to brother or brother to nephew. The government were relatives of the king.

Key people

- Legend has it that the Shang were united when Cheng Tang (Tang the Great) defeated the evil King Jie of the Xia to begin the Shang Dynasty.
- Di Xin was the last of the Shang kings and lost against Zhou in a great battle.
- Archaeologists have discovered a lot of artefacts inside royal tombs which told us a lot about this ancient civilisation. In 1976, they found the tomb of military general and high priestess Lady Fu Hao which is the only Shang tomb that has been found in tact.

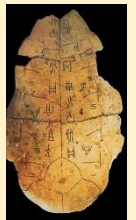


- Fu Hao was one of King Wu Ding's 60 wives. She was well respected and lead ceremonies, sacrifices and read oracles bones. This was very unusual for a woman at the time so shows how important she was. She also led 13,000 soldiers into battle. She was the 1st female military leader.



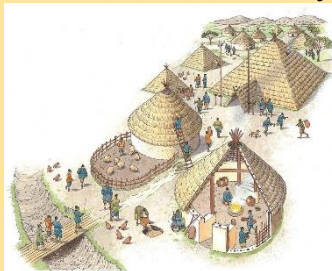
What were their beliefs?

- Priests (and the king too as time went on) would carry out divining ceremonies to see into the future. Tortoise shells or ox shoulder bones were inscribed with a question and then a number of shallow pits would be drilled into the side. Hot pokers would be thrust into the pits and the pattern of the cracks would tell the priest the answer.
- There were temples where animals and human sacrifices were made to the Shang Di, the supreme god who ruled over the lesser gods of the wind, sun and moon (among others). Bronze vessels were used to collect blood from these offerings.



Key information

- Until the discovery of oracle bones, the only evidence for the Shang dynasty were written in books centuries after it ended.
- The dynasty was situated near the Yellow river because the land was fertile.
- The majority of people would have lived as peasants and lived simple lives tending to their fields and caring for their animals.
- Children did not go to school but helped their parents with chores.
- Children of noble families probably would have private tutors to teach them.
- During the period, people worked out how to mine, extract and use bronze. They would use the bronze to make weapons, tools, cooking vessels and chariots.
- Shang buildings were made of wood and clay unlike the Egyptians and Greek's built of stone.



Impact on us

- Modern Chinese writing originated in the Shang period. The writing developed to show calendar dates which helped organise the year into time periods which helped farmers plan ahead.
- Because of their writing system, it meant that their government was very developed and they could conduct wars, organise craftsmen and create a system of government.