

Shang Civilization

The Chronology of China's History

Name	Dynasty		Meaning	Rulers	Ruling House or Clan	Years	
	Chinese	Pinyin					
Three Sovereigns and the Five Emperors	三皇五帝	Sān Huáng Wú Dì	<i>As English</i>	(list)	<i>various</i>	2852 ^[2] -2070 BC	782
Xia Dynasty	夏	Xià	<i>Summer</i>	(list)	Sì (妣)	2070–1600 BC	470
Shang Dynasty	商	Shāng	<i>Toponym</i>	(list)	Zǐ (子)	1600–1029 BC	571
Western Zhou Dynasty	西周	Xī Zhōu	<i>Toponym</i>	(list)	Jī (姬)	1029–771 BC	275
Eastern Zhou Dynasty	東周 / 东周	Dōng Zhōu	<i>Toponym</i>	(list)	Jī (姬)	770–256 BC	514
<i>Traditionally divided into</i>		Chūnqiū	"Histories"				
Spring and Autumn Period	春秋	Chūnqiū	<i>(literally "Spring and Autumn")</i>	(list)	<i>various</i>	722–476 BC	246
Warring States Period	戰國 / 战国	Zhànguó	"Warring States"	(list)		475–221 BC	254
Qin Dynasty	秦	Qín	<i>Unknown, Possibly Toponym</i>	(list)	Yíng (嬴)	221–206 BC	15
Western Han Dynasty	西漢 / 西汉	Xī Hàn	<i>Toponym</i>	(list)	Liú (劉 / 刘)	206 or 202 BC–9 AD, 23-25 AD	215
Xin Dynasty	新	Xīn	"New"	(list)	Wáng (王)	9–23 AD	14
Eastern Han Dynasty	東漢 / 东汉	Dōng Hàn	<i>Toponym</i>	(list)	Liú (劉 / 刘)	25–220	195
Three Kingdoms	三國 / 三国	Sān Guó	<i>As English</i>	(list)	Liú (劉 / 刘) Cáo (曹) Sūn (孫 / 孙)	220–265 or 280	45
Western Jin Dynasty	西晉 / 西晋	Xī Jìn	<i>Ducal title</i>	(list)	Simá (司馬 / 司马)	265–317	52
Eastern Jin Dynasty	東晉 / 东晋	Dōng Jìn	<i>Ducal title</i>	(list)	Simá (司馬 / 司马)	317–420	103
Southern and Northern Dynasties	南北朝	Nán Běi Cháo	<i>As English</i>	(list)	<i>various</i>	386 or 420–589	169
Sui Dynasty	隋	Suí	<i>Ducal title</i> (隨 <i>homophone</i>)	(list)	Yáng (楊 / 杨)	581–618	37
Tang Dynasty	唐	Táng	<i>Ducal title</i>	(list)	Lǐ (李)	618–907	289

The three dynasties: the Xia 夏, the Shang 商 and the Zhou 周; a bronze age civilization.

When?

Various interpretations. According to *the Cambridge History of Ancient China*, the Shang is dated between ca. 1570 to 1045 BC, more than 500 years. This royal house produced 30 kings. Here is a genealogy chart of them.

Generation	Older brothers of patriarch			Line of descent	Younger brothers	Diviner group	
17				大乙 Dà Yì ^[a]		[b]	
16				大丁 Dà Dīng ^[c]			
15				大甲 Dà Jiǎ	卜丙 Bù Bǐng ^[d]		
14			[e]	大庚 Dà Gēng	小甲 Xiǎo Jiǎ ^[f]		
13				大戊 Dà Wù	呂己 Lǚ Jǐ ^[g]		
12				中丁 Zhōng Dīng ^[h]	卜壬 Bù Rén		
11			纘甲 Jiān Jiǎ	祖乙 Zǔ Yì			
10				祖辛 Zǔ Xīn	羌甲 Qiāng Jiǎ ^[i]		
9				祖丁 Zǔ Dīng	南庚 Nán Gēng ^[j]		
8	象甲 Xiàng Jiǎ	盤庚 Pán Gēng	小辛 Xiǎo Xīn	小乙 Xiǎo Yì			
7				武丁 Wǔ Dīng			I
6		[k]	祖庚 Zǔ Gēng	祖甲 Zǔ Jiǎ			II
5			廩辛 Lǐn Xīn ^[l]	康丁 Kāng Dīng			III
4				武乙 Wǔ Yì		IV	
3				文武丁 Wén Wǔ Dīng			
2				帝乙 Dì Yì		V	
1				帝辛 Dì Xīn ^[m]			

Where?



- Ruled mainly in the Yellow River Valley 黄河流域.
- The territory covered much of current Henan Province 河南 with the capital of the Kingdom, An-yang 安阳 in the centre.
- The Shang 商 also called themselves Yin 殷

Bronze Artifacts 青铜器

- **Typology of ritual bronze vessels.** With an illustration. Ding 鼎 (a cooking vessel), Jue 爵 (a wine-warming vessel), Zun or Tsun 尊 (a wine container), Hu 壶 (a wine container) .
- **Decorative Art**



Simuwu Ding 司母戊鼎



Four Sheep Wine Vessel, 四羊方尊

Oracle-bone inscriptions 甲骨文

- Derived from the Shang people's **practice of divination 占卜**.
- Two kinds of bones: the shoulder blades of domestic cattle, water buffalo and a few other animals; the shells of turtles.
- The divining process: polishing; fire-cracking; prognostication; inscribing.
A picture of an oracle-bone with inscriptions.
- The origin of Chinese script: 'pictographic' characters 象形字
Table: Chinese characters commonly viewed as pictographic. 人、齿、鸟、羊、日 etc.

Suggested Reading

The Cambridge History of Ancient China: from the origins of civilization to 221 B.C.,
edited by Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge, 1999).
Shang Civilization, by Kwang-Chih Chang 张光直 (Yale University Press, 1980).

Reading

烈祖

嗟嗟烈祖、有秩斯祜。

申錫無疆、及爾思所。

既載清酤、賚我思成。

亦有和羹、既戒既平。

醴假無言、時靡有爭。

綏我眉壽、黃耇無疆。

約軼錯衡、八鸞鶻鶻。

以假以享、我受命溥將。

自天降康、豐年穰穰。

來假來饗、降福無疆。

顧予烝嘗、湯孫之將。

The Ode of LIE ZU¹

Oh, oh, the illustrious ancestors,
Constant are their blessings;
(There are) repeated bounties without limit,
They reach to the places of you all.

¹ Lie Zu, translated literally as the 'illustrious ancestor', should be the title of King Cheng Tang 成汤, who overthrew the last king of the previous dynasty Xia, 夏 and consequently became the first king of the Shang.

We have filled in (in the sacrificial vessels) the clear overnight-wine,
And they recompense us with perfect happiness;
There is also the well-seasoned soup;
We are careful and quiet, we come forward and arrive silently;
Now there is no contention;
They comfort us with a vigorous old age, a high longevity without end.

There are bandaged wheel-naves and ornate yokes²,
The eight bit-bells³ tinkle;
And so we go forward and present our offerings;
We have received a charge that is vast and great;
From Heaven is sent down property, rich years that are very abundant;
We come forward, we come and present our offerings;
They send down blessings without limit.

They look favourably upon our winter and autumn sacrifices;
The descendant of Tang presents them.

[translated by Bernard Karlgren]

• **What's Shi Jing 诗经?**

Shi Jing 诗经, translated also as **the Book of Odes, the Book of Songs or the Classic of Poetry**, is the oldest extant collection of [Chinese poetry](#).

• **The Ode of Lie Zu (《烈祖》)**

By **the Song people 宋人** many years after the collapse of the Shang; the Song 宋 were descendants of the Shang;

² Denoting a luxurious cart of the king and his courtier used distinctly for the purpose of the divination or sacrifice.

³ Decorative items in the worshipping cart.