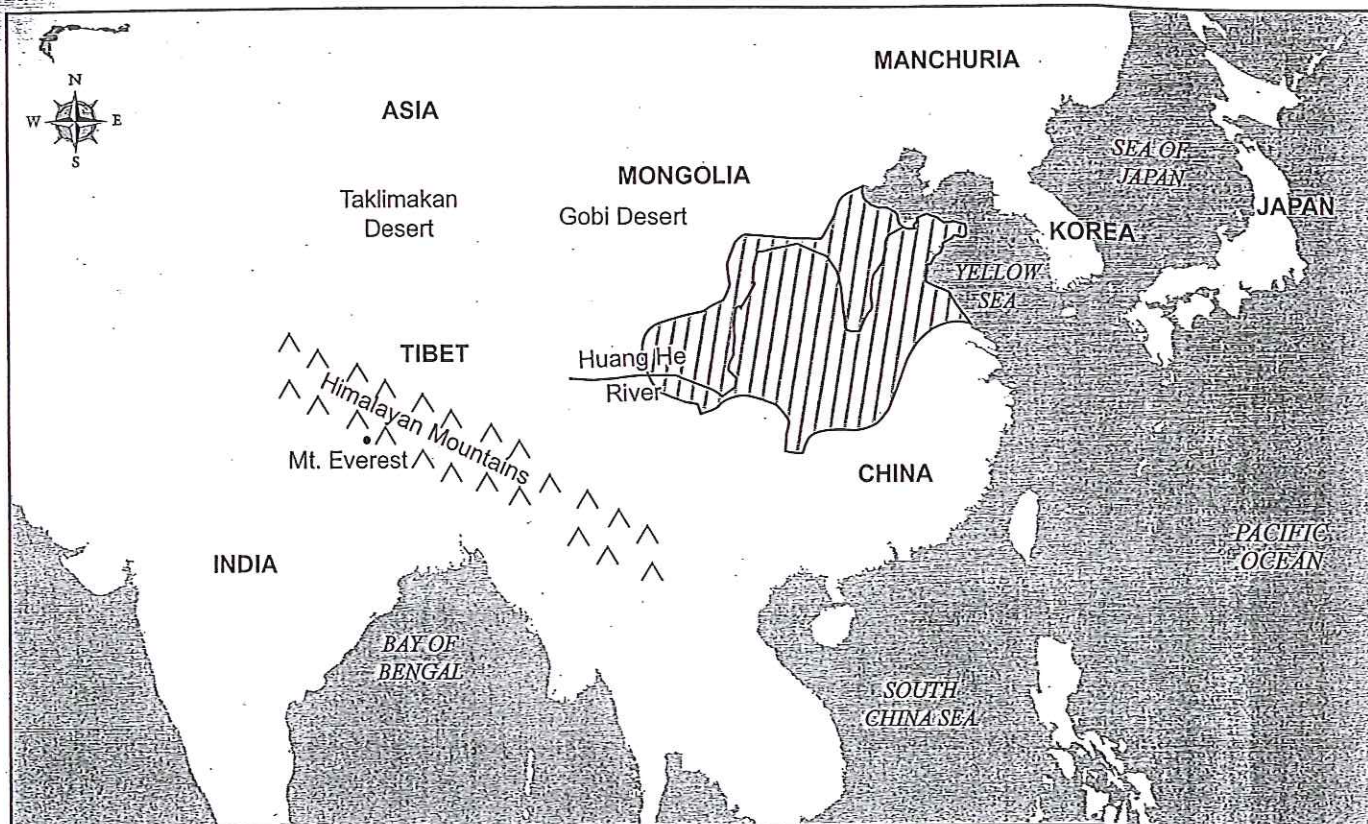



### 13. Ancient China: Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties



The great civilizations of China developed along rivers just like the great civilizations of the Fertile Crescent, India, and Egypt.

 Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties

**A** <sup>1</sup>China is the oldest surviving civilization. <sup>2</sup>Most scientists believe Chinese artifacts can be dated as far back as c. 7000 B.C.

**B** <sup>3</sup>China's vast territory includes the Himalayas, Mount Everest, Gobi and Taklimakan deserts, and a long ocean coastline. <sup>4</sup>These geographic features kept China more isolated than Europe and other parts of Asia. <sup>5</sup>It was challenging to unite the whole country since China was so large.

**C** <sup>6</sup>According to Chinese legend, c. 2200-1800 B.C., in the Huang He (Yellow River) valley, the Xia Dynasty became China's first dynasty. <sup>7</sup>A dynasty is a succession (continuation) of rulers from the same family. <sup>8</sup>There is no archaeological evidence from this period to support this legend.

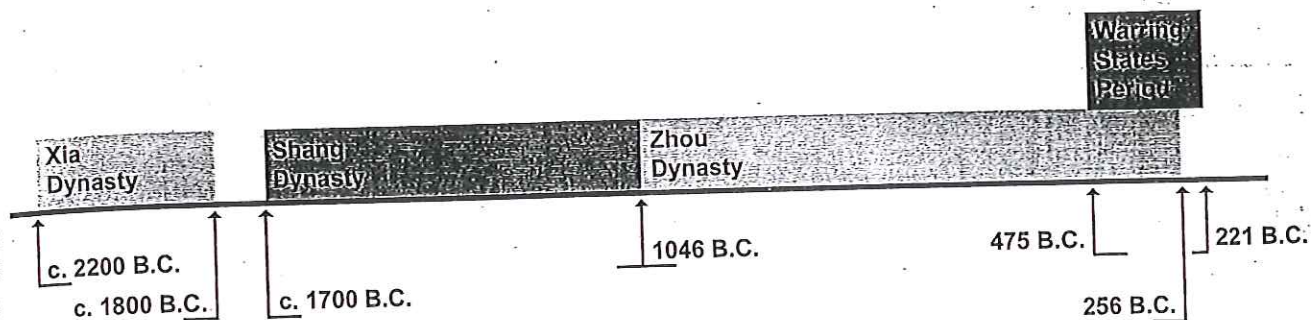
**D** <sup>9</sup>There is archaeological evidence from the Shang Dynasty (c. 1700-1046 B.C.) in the same river valley. <sup>10</sup>The Shang made bronze tools and weapons, and used chariots (horse drawn, two-wheeled vehicles) for fighting. <sup>11</sup>Their artisans created pottery and jade carvings that survived in

the tombs (burial chambers) of Shang rulers, along with weapons, chariots, food, and the remains of animal and human sacrifices. <sup>12</sup>Shang worshipped their ancestors in large palaces and shrines.

**E** <sup>13</sup>The Shang developed the first Chinese writing which uses characters for words. <sup>14</sup>Today, there are more than 50,000 Chinese characters, but it's only necessary to know about 3,000 characters to read most newspapers and books. <sup>15</sup>Modern Chinese speak different languages in different regions, but use the same written language.

**F** <sup>16</sup>In the early 1900s, archeologists discovered ancient artifacts they called oracle bones. <sup>17</sup>Oracle bones are pieces of shell or bone (ox or turtle) which were used to foretell or answer questions about the future. <sup>18</sup>During the Shang Dynasty, questions were carved onto the oracle (bone or shell) and then the oracle was heated until it cracked. <sup>19</sup>Once the bones cracked and splintered, the cracks and pits in the bone were studied to predict a divine (godlike) answer to the question. <sup>20</sup>The person who read the cracks to





answer the question also wrote the answer on the bone or shell. <sup>21</sup>These bones provided a wealth of archeological evidence when they were discovered because of all the information historians learned from the questions and answers written on them. <sup>22</sup>Before the discovery of the oracle bones, some historians doubted the existence of the Shang Dynasty. <sup>23</sup>The practice of reading from oracle bones continued beyond the Shang Dynasty into the Zhou Dynasty. <sup>24</sup>During the Zhou Dynasty, most questions were written in ink, but over time, the ink wore away so archeologists find mostly blank oracle bones from the Zhou Dynasty.

**G** <sup>25</sup>The Zhou conquered the Shang and ruled China from 1046 B.C. to 256 B.C. <sup>26</sup>During the Zhou Dynasty, the use of iron was introduced, trade expanded, and coins were used in trade. <sup>27</sup>The Zhou Dynasty built a section of what would later be called the Grand Canal (manmade river) of China in 486 BC. <sup>28</sup>The Zhou linked the Yangtze River to the Huai River to make trade easier between the two regions. <sup>29</sup>It was during the Zhou reign that people began to believe in the "Mandate of Heaven." <sup>30</sup>The "Mandate of Heaven" meant their rulers were given the right to rule by heaven, but that right would last only if the rulers were fair and just.

**H** <sup>31</sup>In Zhou society, there were two classes: the nobles and the peasants. <sup>32</sup>Nobles lived in wooden buildings, served the king by fighting for him, and ruled over the peasants. <sup>33</sup>Peasants lived in pit houses dug into the ground and worked on the nobles' farms.

**I** <sup>34</sup>The last 200 years of the Zhou Dynasty, was a time of chaos and fighting in China, known as the Warring States Period (c. 475-221 B.C.).

<sup>35</sup>During this period, China was split into many small kingdoms (states) that were ruled by warlords (kings). <sup>36</sup>Each state was made up of a king, nobles (land owning families), and peasants who worked the nobles' land. <sup>37</sup>During the Warring

States Period, kings invaded one another's states to try to increase the size of their own kingdoms.

<sup>38</sup>During this period of China, a small group of legal beliefs—later called Legalism—became popular.

<sup>39</sup>The core beliefs of Legalism were:

- Laws must be clearly written and available to the public.
- <sup>40</sup>Written laws must be the rules of the state and not the whim of the ruler.
- <sup>41</sup>All citizens other than the ruler should be treated equally when it comes to enforcing laws.

<sup>42</sup>Toward the end of the Warring States Period, power had been consolidated (narrowed down) to seven large kingdoms, and finally to one kingdom, which united all of China.

**J** <sup>43</sup>The Chinese advanced armed warfare during the Warring States Period. <sup>44</sup>They developed a way to produce vast quantities of weapons.

<sup>45</sup>Before this time, only the wealthy or nobles had weapons, so fewer people fought in battles. <sup>46</sup>Mass production made it easy to arm vast armies. <sup>47</sup>One of the weapons the Zhou learned to mass produce was the crossbow. <sup>48</sup>Less strength is required to use the crossbow, and it projects an arrow much farther than a standard bow.

**K** <sup>49</sup>The Zhou Dynasty was also considered a time of great philosophers. <sup>50</sup>Two Chinese philosophers, Confucius and Lao Tzu, sought ways to find peace during these turbulent times. <sup>51</sup>Many Chinese follow the ideas of these philosophers today.

**L** <sup>52</sup>Confucius (551-479 B.C.) is probably the most honored Chinese person in history. <sup>53</sup>He believed the ideal life is achieved through self-control and proper conduct. <sup>54</sup>He taught others to have respect toward parents, grandparents, and all elders. <sup>55</sup>Confucius stressed superior government leadership. <sup>56</sup>He revered (honored) tradition more than change. <sup>57</sup>His students put a book of his writings together called the "Analects."

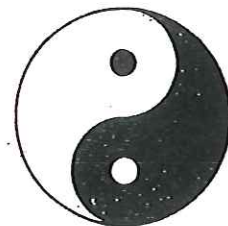




Confucius 571- 479 B.C.

M<sup>58</sup>According to legend, Taoism was founded by Lao Tzu in 550 B.C. <sup>59</sup>He urged others to live simply and model their lives after the harmony found in nature. <sup>60</sup>He is believed to have written the *Tao Te Ching*. <sup>61</sup>Lao Tzu believed the best government would guide rather than rule.

The Yin and Yang is the most common symbol associated with Taoism. The Yin and Yang represent opposite forces. Taoists believe that opposite forces are actually dependent on each other for their existence and recognizing this fact is necessary to live in harmony within the universe.



## Questions

1. Based on the lesson, you can conclude the Chinese believed:

- a. their emperors were gods.
- b. there was a higher power.
- c. it a sin to overthrow the emperor.
- d. that conquest was good.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Mark each statement T for true or F for false.
- a. \_\_\_\_\_ The Shang honored their ancestors.
- Which sentence best supports the answer?
- \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_ Peasants spent their days working in factories.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_ Nobles battled for the king.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_ Chinese believed that Gods gave emperors a special blessing to rule.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Based on the lesson, you can infer:
- a. Chinese knew how to shape metals.
  - b. Chinese believed in one God.
  - c. Chinese followed one philosopher, Confucius
  - d. Chinese loved the Shang rulers.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Both Confucius and Lao Tzu believed:
- a. in a strong government.
  - b. peace could be achieved.
  - c. learning was not important.
  - d. older people should not be honored.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. According to the lesson, what had the greatest affect on China's relations with other countries?
- a. language
  - b. technology
  - c. ideology
  - d. geography

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_



What was true about the Warring States Period?

- a. Laws had to be on public display.
- b. At the end, China was unified under one ruler.
- c. More people had weapons because they were mass produced, like the crossbow.
- d. all of the above

Which sentences best support the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

From the lesson, you can conclude that:

- a. all historians agree the Xia Dynasty was the first Chinese Dynasty.
- b. all citizens of the Shang Dynasty could write.
- c. Chinese were excellent at shooting arrows long distances.
- d. the poorest of the Chinese lived at least partly underground.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 8. What is the primary way historians know something occurred in China before 1200 B.C?
  - a. artifacts and remains
  - b. historical writing
  - c. Chinese art work
  - d. legend

Which sentences best support the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

- 9. Mark each statement F for fact or O for opinion.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ China's geography helped isolate it from the rest of the world.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ It was during the Zhou reign that people began to believe in the "Mandate of Heaven."
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ China is the oldest surviving civilization.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ The Xia Dynasty must have begun in the Huang He River Valley.

### Written Response Question

- 10. What was one of the greatest contributions the Shang Dynasty and the Zhou Dynasty made to future civilizations? Explain how each contribution benefited future civilizations. Please use complete sentences to answer the question.

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