

Dynamic Dynasties

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A dynasty is a system of rule where the throne passes from one member of a ruling family to another. Dynasties have ruled China for 4000 years, from c2070 BC until 1912. During that time, around 15 different dynasties have held power. Each dynasty made important changes to the country, but many aspects of life in China started during the first five dynasties.



Shang Dynasty

The Shang Dynasty is the earliest ruling dynasty in the recorded history of China. The Xia Dynasty is thought to have gone before, however there is no recorded evidence to support this. The Shang Dynasty reigned during China's Bronze Age, from c1600 to c1046 BC, and were known for their advances in bronze work, silk manufacture, jade carving and military technology.

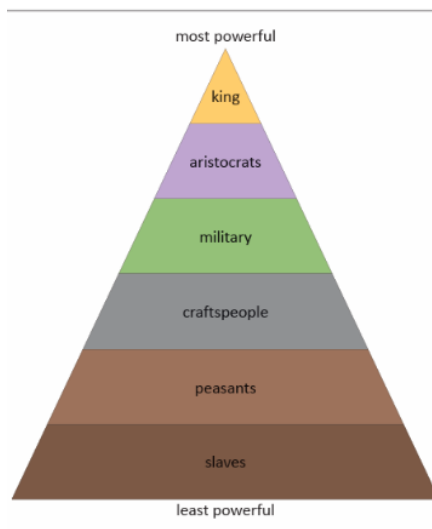
Using historical sources



Historians use historical sources to learn about what life was like in Ancient China. We can ask perspective questions to deepen our understanding and evaluate artefacts.

Power and hierarchy

There was a strict social hierarchy in the Shang Dynasty, with the king at the top and peasants and slaves at the bottom.



Vocabulary

Ancestor	A person from whom someone is descended.
Confucianism	A philosophy based on the ideas of the philosopher, Confucius.
Composite	A new material that is made up of more than one existing material.
Deity	A god or goddess.
Imperial	Relating to an empire.
Oracle bones	Bones used to communicate with ancestors and gods.
Ritual	A ceremony that involves a series of actions performed in a fixed order.
Sacrifice	To kill an animal or a person and offer them to the gods.
Shaman	A priest who is believed to communicate with spirits.
Smelt	To melt metals at a high temperature.
Tyrant	A ruler who has unlimited power over other people and uses it unfairly or cruelly.
Virtue	The quality of being morally good.

The legacy of ancient China

The legacy of ancient China can be seen today. Ancient Chinese beliefs, such as Confucianism, are still followed and the imperial system lasted for over 2000 years. Silk and jade objects are still luxury items. The characters used in Chinese writing are over 5000 years old. The Great Wall of China is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World and ancient Chinese inventions, such as the magnetic compass and paper are used all over the world.



Great Wall of China

