

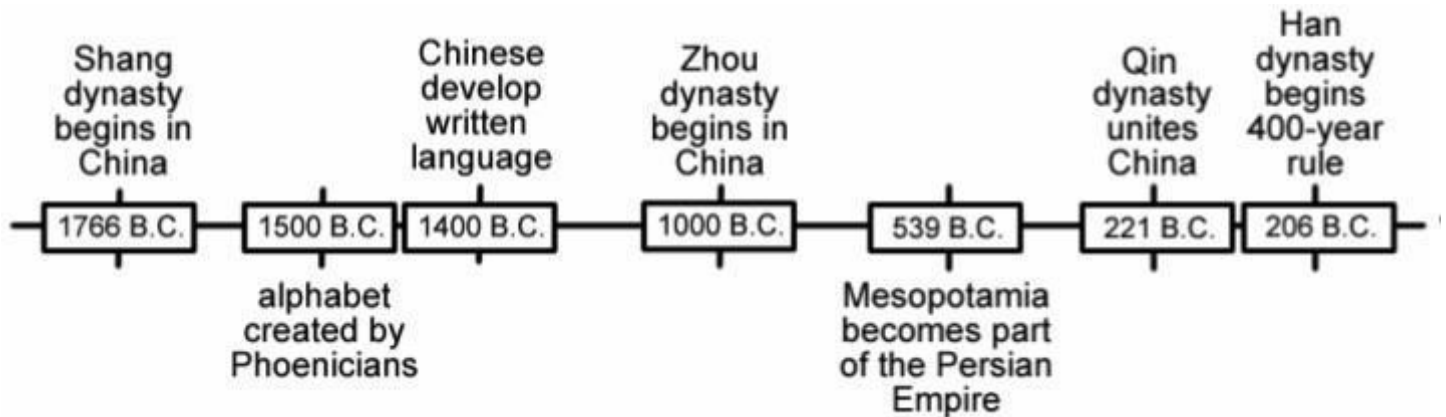
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## Dynasties article

Several **dynasties** ruled China. **Dynasties** are families that rule for several generations.



The four dynasties which ruled **Ancient** China were:

- ★ Shang (1766-1122 BCE)
- ★ Zhou (1122-256 BCE)- (Pronounced like “Joe”)
- ★ Qin (221-206 BCE)- (Pronounced like “Chin”)
- ★ Han (206 BCE-220 CE)

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### **Shang Dynasty (1766 B.C.- 1122 B.C.)**

- The first dynasty that we know about .
- According to legend, there was a Xia dynasty before them but archaeologists have not yet found evidence of its existence.
- Shang kings probably controlled only a small area.
- Loyal princes and local nobles governed most of the land.
- As in other early civilizations, the top level of Shang society was the royal family and noble warriors.
- The majority of people in Shang China were peasants.
- Peasants grew food for everyone and craftspeople made tools, weapons, clothing, ornaments and

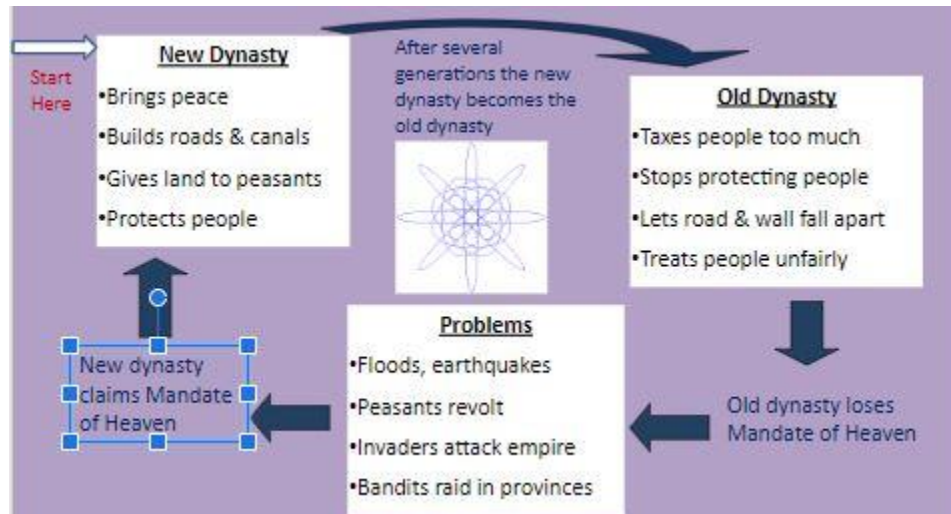
household goods from bronze, silk, jade, clay and other materials.

- Writing on bronze vessels and oracle bones have survived from Shang times.
- The Chinese people of this time and today have a great respect for their ancestors.
- The Chinese created a system of writing.

## **Zhou Dynasty (1122 B.C.- 256 B.C.)**

- The Zhou people took over the Shang.
- To justify their fighting against the Shang, they used the idea of the **Mandate of Heaven**- god gave them the power to rule.
- During the Zhou Dynasty:
  - They developed a complex religion.
  - The Chinese expanded trade and began to use money for the first time. Chinese copper coins were made with holes in the center so that they could be strung on cords.
  - China's economy grew. The use of iron axes, and ox-drawn iron plows and bronze tools helped farmers grow more food.
  - Irrigation systems improved.
- The Zhou set up a feudal state. **Feudalism**- was a system of government in which the lands were divided and local lords governed over their lands but gave military service and other forms of support to the ruler.
  - The lords in China ended up having more power than the emperor.
  - The feudal lords fought one another for control of land. The emperor was too weak to stop them.
- One of these feudal lords began to take over- this was the start of the Qin dynasty (discussed later).
- During all of this fighting, new belief systems developed that would form the basis of China's culture and government for centuries to come.

## Dynastic Cycle (cycle of dynasties)



## Mandate of Heaven (explained!)

The Mandate of Heaven created a justification system. The Mandate either said or implied three major things.

- (1) The right to rule is granted by the gods. This gave the ruler religious power.
- (2) The right to rule is only granted if the ruler cares about his people more than he cares about himself. This gave the ruler secular power, or power over the people, and the right to decide what is good for the people, because the ruler must care about the people, or the gods would remove him as ruler.
- (3) The right to rule is not limited to only one dynasty or family. A dynasty can be replaced. This justified rebellion. When a new leader leads a successful rebellion, he must have the support of the gods, or he would not be allowed to rule, because it was the gods who chose the rulers.

## *MANDATE OF HEAVEN*

- Chinese political idea
  - Rulers exercise power given by heaven
  - Rulers continue to rule if heaven pleased
  - Heaven will take back mandate to rule
  - Heaven will replace ruling dynasty
- Indicators of a Lost Mandate
  - Wars, invasions, military disasters
  - Over-taxation, disgruntled peasants
  - Social, moral decline of elite classes
  - Increased crime, banditry

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### **Qin Dynasty**

- A man named **Qin** (chin) was able to conquer all of the Zhou lands from the feudal nobles. Qin declared himself **Shi Huangdi** (shur hwahng dee)- “First Emperor” of China.
- Qin Shi Huangdi followed Legalism. He was a strong leader who gave out harsh punishments. He tortured, killed, or enslaved many who opposed him (especially the feudal nobles and Confucian scholars).
- **Qin Shi Huangdi**, the First Emperor, was very important because he unified ancient China by making strict laws, taxing everyone in the country and introducing one script for writing.
- He commanded his subjects to build roads and canals, and to join existing walls into one long defensive wall- The Great Wall of China.
- Workers on the Great Wall pounded earth and stone into a mountainous wall almost 25 feet high and topped with a wide brick road. Many workers died in the harsh conditions.
- Over the centuries the wall has been rebuilt and extended many times.
- Qin Shi Huangdi did not agree with the teachings of Confucius and other scholars, and ordered their books to be burned.
- After his death, his dynasty soon collapsed.

- The **terra cotta** army was discovered by accident in 1974 at Xian, when local farmers digging wells about a mile west of the mausoleum broke into a pit containing 6,000 life-size terracotta figures.
  - Altogether over 7,000 terra cotta soldiers, horses, chariots, and even weapons have been unearthed from these pits. It is believed that an army of more than 8,000 terra cotta soldiers were buried fifteen to twenty feet beneath the earth not far from the tomb where Emperor Qin is believed to be buried .
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## Han Dynasty

- In the year 207 B.C. a new dynasty began to rule China. This dynasty was led by a peasant whose name was Liu Bang. Liu Bang had grown tired of the brutal leadership of the Qin Dynasty. Many other people were also tired of the Qin.
- Liu Bang proclaimed that the Qin had lost the mandate of heaven, or the right to rule the nation. He was able to overthrow them, and establish himself as the new emperor of China, and the first emperor of the Han Dynasty.
- The Han Dynasty would rule China for the next 400 years. During this time period they would be one of the wealthiest and most powerful nations on Earth.
- Han emperors made Confucianism the official belief system of the state. Instead of appointing wealthy people to government, positions were open to everyone, but they had to prove themselves through actions and sometimes take tests.
- In 139 B.C.E., a Han emperor by the name of Wudi sent out one of his generals, Zhang Qian, to explore other nations. This general and his army marched throughout distant regions visiting other civilizations and nomadic tribes.
- Zhang Qian was captured and held for 10 years. After 13 years, Zhang Qian was finally able to return to the emperor and report.
- He told Wudi about stories he had heard from the nomadic tribes of a great civilization to the West that equaled the glory of China.
- This was the first time Wudi had heard anything of any other civilizations. Wudi was a smart and wise ruler, who saw the potential for trade between the two cultures.

### Achievements of the Han Dynasty

- This was known as one of the **golden ages of Chinese civilization**.
- There were advances in science and medicine. They studied eclipses and developed anesthetics, and experimented with herbal remedies and other drugs. They also used acupuncture- inserting different sized needles into the skin at certain points to relieve pain or cure diseases.
- They made paper out of wood pulp- this basic method is used today.
- They had advances in shipbuilding, fishing reels, wheelbarrows, and suspension bridges.
- A seismograph was invented, because earthquakes were a problem for the Chinese.
- They had great architecture and used jade, ivory, and ceramic.
- Silk makers and bronze-workers improved techniques.

# Chinese Dynasties and Their Achievements

Dynasties	Notable Rulers	Achievements/Notable Ideas
<b>Shang Dynasty</b> 1500-1100 B.C.E.	Thirty separate kings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruled from a succession of seven different capitals.</li> <li>• Invention of writing</li> </ul>
<b>Zhou Dynasty</b> 1122-256 B.C.E.	Kings + Noblemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion</li> <li>• Regional rulers/ Feudalism</li> <li>• Mandate of Heaven</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> books of bamboo strips</li> </ul>
<b>Qin Dynasty</b> 221-206 B.C.E.	Qin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> Emperor, harsh rule, central authority</li> <li>• Written laws</li> <li>• Building projects (Great Wall of China)</li> <li>• China named from "Qin"</li> </ul>
<b>Han Dynasty</b>	Han Wudi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 400 year rule</li> <li>• Exploration (Zhang Qian)</li> <li>• Expansion of trade</li> <li>• Silk Road</li> <li>• Food reserves</li> <li>• Merit-based appointments</li> </ul>

