

The rise of shang dynasty



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The Shang Dynasty (C. 1500-1045BCE) is believed to have been the second dynasty of ancient China, though it is widely accepted to be the first Chinese dynasty. According to archeological records, the Shang dynasty came into view from an earlier culture, known as the Xia. Its civilization extended from the West of the Yellow River plains to Shangdong in the East. The dynasty's main strength was in the modern day Henan Province that is located in the North. The dynasty is said to have had several capitals all through its time, with only one being clearly identified, Yin, which is situated near the present day Anyang.

In actual sense, there are no specific dates that indicate the period when the dynasty actually affirmed its authority all over the Xia. However, it is clear that they gained power around 1500 BC. Their rising to power was as a result of their military force over the region of Xia. This is because they had military advantage of chariots which gave them an edge in feuds. As a matter of fact, it is believed that Tang, the first Shang ruler, deposed Jie, the last Xia ruler, sending him into exile, where he died.

Military Strength and Warlike Structure

The military technologies of the Shang were from Mesopotamia. The ruling elites were usually in a position of monopolizing the production of bronze in the Yellow River Valley. This was done by controlling access to copper as well as tin ores. They were then used in defeating forces who were only equipped with stones, wood, as well as bone weapons. Additionally, the nobles utilized the bronze in making fittings for horse drawn chariots.

Another way of exerting their authority was by the use of bows. Additionally, the Shang military had chariots, which were armed with an archer, a driver, and at times, a man with a spear. The Shang established an empire that had a similar structure as was the case with other conquerors. This was done by leaving behind a garrison force that would police all the local people. In this way, the local king was turned into a subservient ally who was free to manage the domestic matters that included taxing the conquered.

Apparently, the Shang dynasty had a well established and advanced military defense system. It had walls, bronze weapons as well as a very organized army. The Shang army was almost persistently involved in battles to control other clans and keep the hoi polloi under control. The army was made up of horse cavalries, horse drawn chariots as well as foot soldiers. Most of the foot soldiers were just a bunch of untrained farmers who would give service to the army especially when the royalty was in need of an army to take the brunt of an attack.

In many ways, the advancement of the bronze technology as well as the use of bronze weapons gave the Shang military an upper hand over their adversaries. This absolutely altered their way of combat. In this regard, they utilized newly developed weapons like bronze tipped halberd as well as compound bows. The use of chariots altered the way battles were fought. This is because the chariots made it easy for the commanders to supervise their troops efficiently.

Additionally, by the virtue of using the chariots, they were in a position of covering great distances, much to the chagrin of their enemies. The chariots

were also instrumental in making the soldiers exceedingly mobile and swift. Due to the fact that war was a fundamental part of the Shang Dynasty, the improvements in weaponry were very crucial in enabling the Shang to preserve its military preeminence.

Economic Status in China

The main production department of the Shang dynasty was agriculture. In most cases, the serfs as well as the slaves had the responsibility of farming as well as other economic functions in the Shang society. At the time, some of the main crops included rice, mulberry, wheat, millet, as well as hemp. Millet was the staple food of the Shang. However, wheat and rice were also cultivated in the fields that belonged to the royal aristocracy. Furthermore, much of the agricultural surpluses produced by these royal fields were meant to support the royal Shang family as well as the ruling elite. Large armies and advanced handicraft industries were also supported by the royal fields.

Additionally, the large royal pastures also provided animals that were meant for meat consumption as well as sacrifices. According to the Shang, the cultivation of land would only take place for a few years, only to be left fallow after some time. As a result, new lands were required for farming. Generally, the Shang farmers had a fairly advanced system of agriculture that had ploughs pulled by domesticated water buffaloes or humans.

This would be carried out by clearing scrubland or forests, a task that was done by slaves under the supervision of the Shang authorities. This would be done in the context of hunting missions. Chickens as well as pigs were

domesticated and were termed as ' walking refrigerators'. This is because they were as meat that was being kept as fresh meat until when required.

During that period, a number of farmers who knew how to cultivate cultivated silkworm. These would then be woven into beautiful cloth which would be used for clothing. Actually, silk became one of the major exports. Spindle-wheels would be used for the purpose of making textiles. It is, however, notable that the workforce was formally organized. Controlled workers were tasked with the production of silk in several workshops for the nobility.

In most cases, the fields and workshops were manned by manual labor of different levels of servitude. In essence, a number of historians are of the view that the dependent workers were actually slaves. For this reason, the Shang dynasty was also called the ' slave society'. During the reign of King Tang, methods of fishing were developed with the view of using fish as a product of trade. Other types of commodity exchanged were also used like trading crops for another.

In actual sense, even deals were also settled with other communities by exchanging goods for others. It was also during the Shang dynasty that musical instruments were created. These instruments were created out of bronze products. Furthermore, even casting was established during this epoch. The meticulous technique of bronze casting was dexterously used in making a variety of musical instruments. Some of these instruments have been discovered by archeologists at the grounds of China.