

Dynasties in chinese history and political science

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History and Political Science The Shang Dynasty Shang Dynasty has ruled from 1600 to 1046 B. C. Bo or Zhengzhou is the capital of Shang Dynasty. There are 12 Shang kings starting from Pangeng to Yinxu. Shang is divided into three periods: the Pre-Shang Period, Middle Shang Period, and Late Shang Period (Pletcher, 35). The Shang Dynasty is known for two palace foundations, elite burials, ceremonial jade blades and sceptres, bronze axes and dagger axes, simple ritual bronzes, massive-rammed earth fortification, four monumental tetrapods, workshops for bronze casting, pot making, bone working, and two inscribed tablets of oracle bones. The art of Shang has zoomorphic and theriomorphic designs with intricate geometric backgrounds. The earliest body of Chinese writing appeared in the oracle bone inscriptions in Xiaotun made from scapulae or turtle plastrons (Pletcher, 38). Shang Dynasty believed on luck and prognostication, as well as in crop and human offerings to Gods. Their government is based on politico-religious hierarchy. Shangdi (The Lord on High) was the highest living power of all given to a king. The king ruled through kinship alliances and may refer himself as *yu yiren* (I, the one man). Women also played a key role in alliances and continuity of power.

Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 B. C) The Zhou Dynasty has ruled for the longest period of Chinese History. It is divided into Xi (Western) Zhou and Dong (Eastern) Zhou. The capital of Zhou is near Huang He (Yellow River). The first ancestor of Zhou Dynasty is Houji (Lord of Millet) and is an agricultural deity (Pletcher, 42). Zhou Dynasty migrated to avoid pressure from powerful people and nomads and stayed on the Valley of Wei River to start farming. The Zhou Dynasty united with Shang Dynasty through occasional marriages and borrowed bronze casting. The greatest contribution of Zhou Dynasty is the feudal system. The feudal system was

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divided into ranks - ruler, feudal lord or court minister, shi or gentlemen or servants of feudal lords, and commoners or slaves (Pletcher, 45). Leadership was based mainly on familial relationship. Treaties of war were established including the Bingfa (Art of War) by Sunzi and cavalry welfare during Zhou Dynasty. Wheat and soy bean grew importance in economy, as well as trade industry. Chinese develop intensive agriculture using manure and night soil, rotating crops, and irrigation. Zhou Dynasty started the land individual ownership taxes. Qin Dynasty (221-207 B. C.) Qin was regarded as a barbarian dynasty and played a supporting in the power struggle of Chunqiu. Qin Dynasty is the only major power that did not suffer from battle within its territory (Pletcher, 54). They developed a new governmental pattern away from feudal system. Standardization of localities was created and unification in 221 B. C. The king assumed the title of Shihuangdi or First Sovereign Emperor. Shihuangdi built the Great Wall of China to protect the Qin dynasty from barbarians (Pletcher, 57). Books criticizing the emperors were burned and intellectuals were massacred. Shihuangdi died on 210 B. C. and led to the fall of dynasty. Among the contributions of Qin was giving of farmers incentives. To increase incentives, the Qin government levied a double tax on any male citizen who was not a master of the household resulting to break down of extended family and proliferation of nuclear family. Qin also standardized systems of weights and measures. Han Dynasty Han was founded by Liu Bang, best known as Gaozu. He the title of emperor in 202 B. C. Han Dynasty is divided into Xi (Western) Han and Dong (Eastern) Han. The capital cities are Xi'an for Xi and Luoyang for Dong. Han formed the first long-lasting regime to wield administrative power for 400 years (Pletcher, 60). Han's form of government was centralized and derived from Qin.

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Succession is mainly hereditary. Statesmen proposed intensive use of manpower and exploitation of natural resources as well as promotion of scholarship and civil service. Han's military strength had been overtaxed. The experiments in new types of coinage and in controlling economic transactions failed to achieve its purpose of increasing state resources thereby adopting a positive foreign policy. The rivalry between successors increases as well as the incidence of massacres making Han Dynasty to fall.

Confucius Philosophy The Confucius philosophy was highly influential among Chinese government. Confucius believed that the state is compared to a harmonious family. The father is the head of the family and has special rights and duties. The aged members of the family provide wisdom and guidance to the young ones. The oldest male should guide and protect members of the family. In return, they owe him obedience even it appears that he's decision is wrong (Pletcher, 88). The other philosophy of Confucius focused on gentility - the courtesy, justice, and moderation of a public man. A true gentleman must understand the need of the poor. The rich and the strong have a sense of obligation towards the poor and the weak. A true gentleman was made and even a low status person could learn how to be one. A gentleman advises the ruler to promote fairness and general welfare and a ruler who follows his gentlemen retains the mandate of heaven (Pletcher, 88). Reference: Pletcher, Kenneth. *Understanding China: The History of China*. New York, Britannica Educational Publishing, 2011. p. 35-89.