

# Chapter

# 7

# Early China

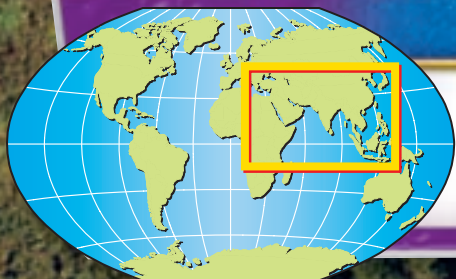
D.E. Cox/Getty Images

The first Great Wall of China was built more than 2,000 years ago to keep out invaders. The current wall, which is about 4,000 miles long, was built about 500 years ago. ▼



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

## When & Where?



1800 B.C.

c. 1750 B.C. ●  
Shang dynasty begins

1150 B.C.

1045 B.C. ●  
Wu Wang creates Zhou dynasty

500 B.C.

551 B.C. ●  
Confucius is born

A.D. 150

c. A.D. 100 ●  
Silk Road established

# Chapter Preview

The ancient Chinese, like the Egyptians, established long-ruling dynasties. The Chinese valued three great philosophies: Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.



View the Chapter 7 video in the *World History: Journey Across Time* Video Program.

## Section

### 1

## China's First Civilizations

Chinese civilization was shaped by geography such as mountains and large rivers. Long-lasting dynasties gained power through strong armies.

## Section

### 2

## Life in Ancient China

Early Chinese society had three main social classes: aristocrats, farmers, and merchants. During periods of unrest, ideas such as Confucianism and Daoism developed.

## Section

### 3

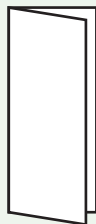
## The Qin and Han Dynasties

Both the Qin and Han dynasties created strong central governments. New inventions developed during the Han dynasty helped to improve the lives of Chinese people.

### FOLDABLES™ Study Organizer

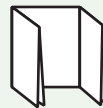
**Organizing Information** Make this foldable to help you organize information about the important people in the early history of China.

**Step 1** Fold a sheet of paper in half from side to side.

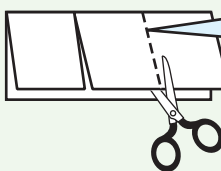


Fold it so the left edge lies about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the right edge.

**Step 2** Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.



**Step 3** Unfold and cut the top layer only along both folds.



This will make three tabs.

**Step 4** Turn the paper and label it as shown.



**Reading and Writing**  
As you read the chapter, list important people and what they did or taught during these periods in Chinese history.

# Reading Social Studies

Reading  
Skill

Text Structure

## 1 Learn It!

### Headings and Punctuation

As you read this chapter, pay attention to bold headings and punctuation. They are used by authors to help you better understand what you are reading. Look at the heading on page 235, **Chinese Thinkers**. By putting these words in red, the author lets you know, even before you begin reading, that this part of the chapter is about famous thinkers in Chinese history. Paying attention to punctuation marks also can help you understand the text. Look at the punctuation marks in the paragraph below.

Words are indented to show where a new paragraph and a new idea begin.

→ To Confucius, the best way to behave was similar to an idea known as the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

—from page 236

A colon (:) tells you that the words that follow are an illustration or an explanation of the first part of the sentence.

### Reading Tip

Read a section out loud. Say the names of the punctuation marks as you read. This will help you remember why certain punctuation marks are used.

Quotation marks have several uses. Here they are used to set off words taken from another source.

## 2 Practice It!

### Punctuation Clues

Look at the heading and punctuation in the following paragraph and answer the questions that follow.

**The Zhou Empire Falls** Over time, the local rulers of the Zhou territories became powerful. They stopped obeying the Zhou kings and set up their own states. In 403 B.C. fighting broke out. For almost 200 years, the states battled each other. Historians call this time the “Period of the Warring States.”

—from page 231

#### Read to Write

Suppose you had a younger brother, sister, or friend who was just learning to read. How could you explain the use of punctuation marks to this person? Write a step-by-step explanation of what he or she would need to know about periods, commas, colons, and quotation marks.

1. Based on the heading, what do you think this section will be about?
2. Why do you think the phrase “Period of the Warring States” is in quotation marks?
3. How will you know when a new paragraph begins?



▲ Winged dragon from Zhou dynasty

## 3 Apply It!

As you read the chapter, jot down punctuation or section headings that you do not understand. Write them in your notebook to discuss later.

# China's First Civilizations

## Get Ready to Read!

### What's the Connection?

In earlier chapters, you learned that many civilizations developed in river valleys. The civilizations of China also began in river valleys. However, other features of the land, such as mountains and deserts, affected China's history as well.

### Focusing on the Main Ideas

- Rivers, mountains, and deserts helped shape China's civilization. (page 225)
- Rulers known as the Shang became powerful because they controlled land and had strong armies. (page 226)
- Chinese rulers claimed that the Mandate of Heaven gave them the right to rule. (page 229)

### Locating Places

Huang He (HWAHNG HUH)

Chang Jiang (CHAHNG JYAHNG)

Anyang (AHN•YAHNG)

### Meeting People

Wu Wang (WOO WAHNG)

### Building Your Vocabulary

**dynasty** (DY•nuh•stee)

**aristocrat** (uh•RIHS•tuh•KRAT)

**pictograph** (PIHK•tuh•GRAF)

**ideograph** (IH•dee•uh•GRAF)

**bureaucracy** (byu•RAH•kruh•see)

**mandate** (MAN•DAYT)

**Dao** (DOW)

### Reading Strategy

**Summarizing Information** Complete a chart like the one below describing the characteristics of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.

	Shang Dynasty	Zhou Dynasty
Dates		
Leadership		
Accomplishments		



## When & Where?



1750 B.C.

c. 1750 B.C.

Shang dynasty begins

975 B.C.

1045 B.C.

Wu Wang creates Zhou dynasty

200 B.C.

221 B.C.

Qin dynasty begins

# China's Geography

**Main Idea** Rivers, mountains, and deserts helped shape China's civilization.

**Reading Focus** Why do you think so many cities and towns were built beside rivers? Read to learn why rivers were important to the development of China.

The **Huang He** (HWAHNG HUH), or Yellow River, flows across China for more than 2,900 miles (4,666 km). It gets its name from the rich yellow soil it carries from Mongolia to the Pacific Ocean.

Like rivers in early Mesopotamia and Egypt, China's Huang He flooded the land. The flooding was good and bad for the Chinese. When the river overflowed, many

people drowned and many homes were destroyed. As a result, the Chinese called the Huang He "China's sorrow."

The river, however, also brought a gift. When the river flooded, it left behind rich topsoil in the Huang He valley. As a result, farmers could grow large amounts of food on very small farms.

China also has another great river, called the **Chang Jiang** (CHAHNG JYAHNG), or the Yangtze River. The Chang Jiang is even longer than the Huang He. It flows for about 3,400 miles (5,471 km) east across central China where it empties into the Yellow Sea. Like the Huang He valley, the valley of the Chang Jiang also has rich soil for farming.

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC** **The Geography of China** *In Motion*

**Using Geography Skills**

While the country of China has one of the world's largest populations, little of its land can be farmed.

1. What is the name of the desert on China's northern border near Mongolia?
2. What effect did China's mountains and deserts have on its history?

Find NGS online map resources @ [www.nationalgeographic.com/maps](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps)

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Even though China has rich soil along its rivers, only a little more than one-tenth of its land can be farmed. That is because mountains and deserts cover most of the land. The towering Himalaya close off China to the southwest. The Kunlun Shan and Tian Shan are mountain ranges on China's western border. The Gobi, a vast, cold, rocky desert, spreads east from the mountains. These mountains and deserts shaped much of Chinese history. They were like a wall around the Chinese, separating them from most other peoples.

Over time, the Chinese people united to form one kingdom. They called their homeland "the Middle Kingdom." To them, it was the world's center and its leading civilization. The Chinese developed a way of life that lasted into modern times.

**Reading Check Identify** Name two rivers important to early Chinese civilizations.

## The Shang Dynasty

**Main Idea** Rulers known as the Shang became powerful because they controlled land and had strong armies.

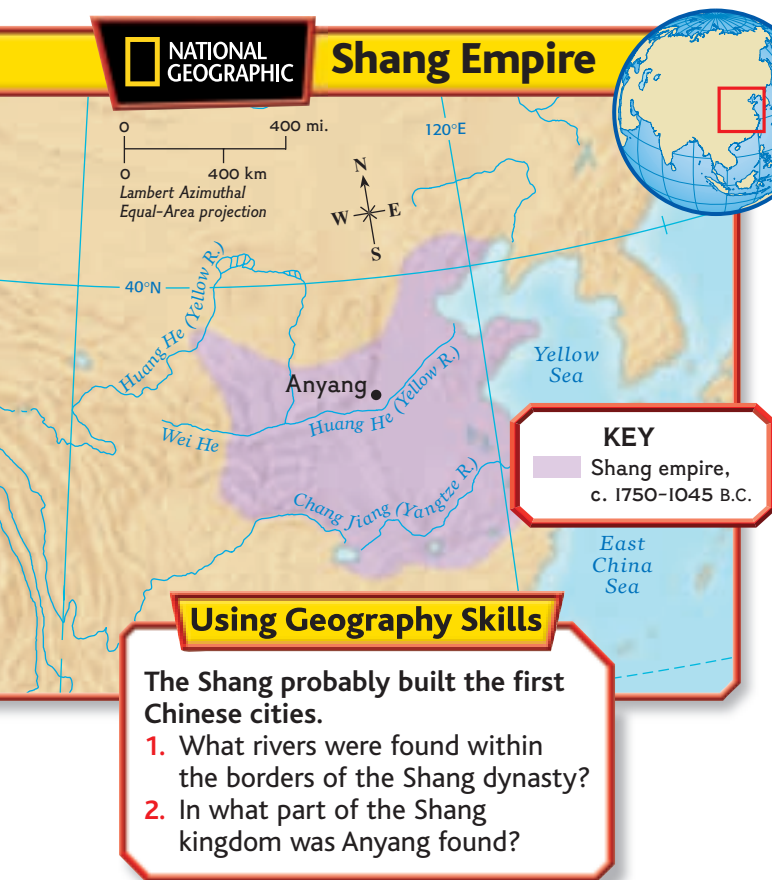
**Reading Focus** Who are the leaders in your community? What gives them their power? Read to learn why some people in early China had more power than others.

Little is known about how Chinese civilization began. Archaeologists, however, have found pottery in the Huang He valley dating back thousands of years. These artifacts show that the Huang He valley was the first center of Chinese civilization. Archaeologists think that people stayed in the valley and farmed the land because of rich soil. As their numbers rose, they began building towns, and soon after, the first Chinese civilization began.

China's first rulers were probably part of the Xia (SYAH) dynasty. A **dynasty** (DY•nuh•stee) is a line of rulers who belong to the same family. Little is known about the Xia. We know more about the next dynasty, the Shang. The Shang kings ruled from about 1750 B.C. to 1045 B.C.

**Who Were the Shang?** Archaeologists have found huge walls, royal palaces, and royal tombs from the time of the Shang. These remains show that the Shang may have built the first Chinese cities. One of these cities was **Anyang** (AHN•YAHNG) in northern China. Anyang was China's first capital. From there, the Shang kings ruled the early Chinese people.

The people of the Shang dynasty were divided into groups. The most powerful group was the king and his family. The first Shang king ruled over a small area in northern China. His armies used chariots and bronze weapons to take over nearby areas.



## Focus on Everyday Life

Asian Art & Archaeology/CORBIS

In time, the Shang kings ruled over most of the Huang He valley.

Later, Shang kings chose warlords to govern the kingdom's territories. Warlords are military leaders who command their own armies. However, the king controlled even larger armies who defended the kingdom's borders. The king's armies helped him stay in power.

Under the king, the warlords and other royal officials made up the upper class. They were **aristocrats** (uh•RIHS•tuh•KRATS), nobles whose wealth came from the land they owned. Aristocrats passed their land and their power from one generation to the next.

In Shang China, a few people were traders and artisans. Most Chinese, however, were farmers. They worked the land that belonged to the aristocrats. They grew grains, such as millet, wheat, and rice, and raised cattle, sheep, and chickens. A small number of enslaved people captured in war also lived in Shang China.

**Spirits and Ancestors** People in Shang China worshiped gods and spirits. Spirits were believed to live in mountains, rivers, and seas. The people believed that they had to keep the gods and spirits happy by making offerings of food and other goods. They believed that the gods and spirits would be angry if they were not treated well. Angry gods and spirits might cause farmers to have a poor harvest or armies to lose a battle.

People also honored their ancestors, or departed family members. Offerings were made in the hope that ancestors would help in times of need and bring good luck. To this day, many Chinese still remember their ancestors by going to temples and burning small paper copies of food and clothing.

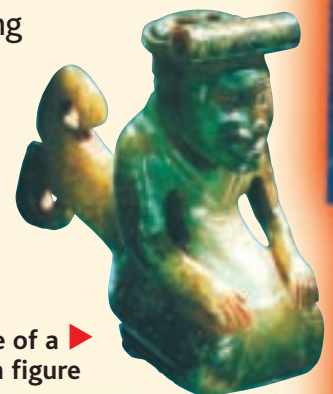


▲ Bronze vessel

**The Role of Women** Zheng Zhenxiang was China's first female archaeologist. In 1976 she found the tomb of Fu Hao, China's first female general. In the tomb were more than 2,000 artifacts from the Shang dynasty, including weapons, bronze vessels, jade objects, and bones with Chinese characters carved on them.

Fu Hao, the wife of King Wu Ding, was given a royal burial. She was famous for her strength, martial arts skills, and military strategies. She often helped her husband defeat their enemies on the battlefield. Fu Hao was the first female in China's history to receive the highest military rank.

Her tomb and its artifacts reveal the grand civilization of China's Shang dynasty. During this period, the Chinese developed writing, a calendar, and musical instruments.



Jade sculpture of a seated human figure ▶

### Connecting to the Past

1. What was Fu Hao famous for during her life?
2. Describe what the artifacts found in Fu Hao's tomb might reveal about life during that time.



These copies represent things that their departed relatives need in the afterlife.

**Telling the Future** Shang kings believed that they received power and wisdom from the gods, the spirits, and their ancestors.

Shang religion and government were closely linked, just as they were in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. An important duty of Shang kings was to contact the gods, the spirits, and ancestors before making important decisions.

The kings asked for the gods' help by using oracle (AWR•uh•kuhl) bones. They had priests scratch questions on the bones, such as "Will I win the battle?" and "Will I recover from my illness?" Then the priests placed hot metal rods inside the bones, causing them to crack. They believed that the pattern of the cracks formed answers from the gods. The priests interpreted the answers and wrote them down for the kings. Scratches on oracle bones are the earliest known examples of Chinese writing.

**The Chinese Language** The scratches on oracle bones show how today's Chinese writing began. However, the modern Chinese language is much more complex.

Like many other ancient languages, early Chinese writing used pictographs and ideographs. **Pictographs** (PIHK•tuh•GRAFS) are characters that stand for objects. For example, the Chinese characters for a mountain, the sun, and the moon are pictographs. **Ideographs** (IH•dee•uh•GRAFS) are another kind of character used in Chinese writing. They join two or more pictographs to represent an idea. For example, the ideograph for "east" relates to the idea of the sun rising in the east. It is a combination of pictographs that show the sun coming up behind trees.

Unlike Chinese, English and many other languages have writing systems based on an alphabet. An alphabet uses characters that stand for sounds. The Chinese use some characters to stand for sounds, but most characters still represent whole words.



**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

# HISTORY MAKERS

## Chinese Writing

The Chinese writing system was created nearly 3,500 years ago during the Shang dynasty. The earliest examples of Chinese writing have been found on animal bones. The carvings on these bones show that Chinese writing has always used symbols to represent words. Some of the carvings are pictures. For example, the verb *to go* was represented by a picture of a foot. The characters were carved in vertical columns and read from top to bottom, like modern Chinese writing. The writing on the bones recorded the Shang kings' questions about a wide range of topics—from the weather to good fortune. Chinese writing has changed in many ways, but it still reflects its ancient roots in pictures and symbols.

Oracle bone ▶

**Shang Artists** The people in Shang China developed many skills. Farmers produced silk, which weavers used to make colorful clothes. Artisans made vases and dishes from fine white clay. They also carved statues from ivory and a green stone called jade.

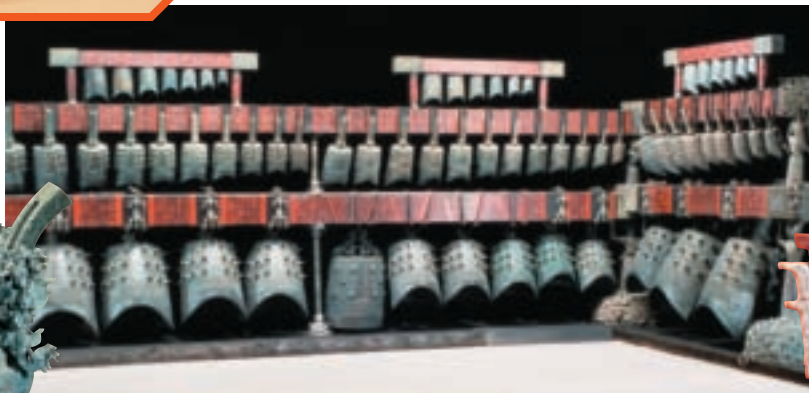
The Shang are best known for their works of bronze. To make bronze objects, artisans made clay molds in several sections. Next, they carved detailed designs into the clay. Then, they fit the pieces of the mold tightly together and poured in melted bronze. When the bronze cooled, the mold was removed. A beautifully decorated work of art remained.

Shang bronze objects included sculptures, vases, drinking cups, and containers called urns. The Shang used bronze urns to prepare and serve food for rituals honoring ancestors.

**Reading Check Explain** What was the role of Shang warlords?



◀ Buffalo-shaped bronze vessel from the Shang dynasty



▼ Bronze food container from the Shang dynasty



◀ Bronze bowl and ladle from Zhou dynasty

▲ These bronze bells are from the Zhou dynasty. *How long did the Zhou dynasty last?*



## The Zhou Dynasty

**Main Idea** Chinese rulers claimed that the Mandate of Heaven gave them the right to rule.

**Reading Focus** Who gives you permission to do the things you do? Your mother? Your teacher? Read to find out how the rulers of the Zhou dynasty turned to the heavens for permission to rule.

During the rule of the Shang, a great gap existed between the rich and the poor. Shang kings lived in luxury and began to treat people cruelly. As a result, they lost the support of the people in their kingdom. In 1045 B.C. an aristocrat named **Wu Wang** (WOO WAHNG) led a rebellion against the Shang. After defeating the Shang, Wu began a new dynasty called the Zhou (JOH).

**The Zhou Government** The Zhou dynasty ruled for more than 800 years—longer than any other dynasty in Chinese history.

Zhou kings ruled much like Shang rulers. The Zhou king was at the head of the government. Under him was a large **bureaucracy** (byu•RAH•kruh•see). A bureaucracy is made up of appointed officials who are responsible for different areas of government. Like the Shang rulers, the Zhou king was in charge of defending the kingdom.

# Zhou Empire



## Using Geography Skills

Zhou rulers maintained the longest-lasting dynasty in Chinese history.

1. What body of water made up the eastern border of Zhou territory?
2. Why did the Zhou divide their kingdom into smaller territories?

The Zhou kings copied the Shang system of dividing the kingdom into smaller territories. The kings put aristocrats they trusted in charge of each territory. The positions the aristocrats held were hereditary. That meant that when an aristocrat died, his son or another relative would take over as ruler of the territory.

The Chinese considered the king their link between heaven and earth. His chief duty was to carry out religious rituals. The Chinese believed these rituals strengthened the link between them and the gods. This belief paved the way for a new idea that the Zhou kings introduced to government. They claimed that kings ruled China because they had the Mandate of Heaven.

## What Was the Mandate of Heaven?

According to Zhou rulers, a heavenly law gave the Zhou king the power to rule. This **mandate** (MAN • DAYT), or formal order, was called the Mandate of Heaven. Based on the mandate, the king was chosen by heavenly

order because of his talent and virtue. Therefore, he would rule the people with goodness and wisdom.

The Mandate of Heaven worked in two ways. First, the people expected the king to rule according to the proper “Way,” called the **Dao** (DOW). His duty was to keep the gods happy. A natural disaster or a bad harvest was a sign that he had failed in his duty. People then had the right to overthrow and replace the king.

The Mandate of Heaven also worked another way. It gave the people, as well as the king, important rights. For example, people had the right to overthrow a dishonest or evil ruler. It also made clear that the king was not a god himself. Of course, each new dynasty claimed it had the Mandate of Heaven. The only way people could question the claim was by overthrowing the dynasty.

**New Tools and Trade** For thousands of years, Chinese farmers depended on rain to water their crops. During the Zhou dynasty, the Chinese developed irrigation and flood-control systems. As a result, farmers could grow more crops than ever before.

Improvements in farming tools also helped farmers produce more crops. By 550 B.C., the Chinese were using iron plows. These sturdy plows broke up land that had been too hard to farm with wooden plows. As a result, the Chinese could plow more and produce more crops. Because more food could support more people, the population increased. During the late Zhou dynasty, China’s population had expanded to about 50 million people.

## History online

**Web Activity** Visit [jat.glencoe.com](http://jat.glencoe.com) and click on *Chapter 7—Student Web Activity* to learn more about ancient China.

Trade and manufacturing grew along with farming. An important trade item during the Zhou dynasty was silk. Pieces of Chinese silk have been found throughout central Asia and as far away as Greece. This suggests that the Chinese traded far and wide.



◀ This statue of a winged dragon is from the Zhou dynasty. **From what metal did the Chinese make plows and weapons during the Zhou dynasty?**

**The Zhou Empire Falls** Over time, the local rulers of the Zhou territories became powerful. They stopped obeying the Zhou kings and set up their own states. In 403 B.C. fighting broke out. For almost 200 years, the states battled each other. Historians call this time the “Period of the Warring States.”

Instead of nobles driving chariots, the warring states used large armies of foot soldiers. To get enough soldiers, they issued laws forcing peasants to serve in the army. The armies fought with swords, spears, and

crossbows. A crossbow uses a crank to pull the string and shoots arrows with great force.

As the fighting went on, the Chinese invented the saddle and stirrup. These let soldiers ride horses and use spears and crossbows while riding. In 221 B.C. the ruler of Qin (CHIHN), one of the warring states, used a large cavalry force to defeat the other states and set up a new dynasty.

**Reading Check Identify** What was the chief duty of Chinese kings?

## Section 1 Review

History online

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### Reading Summary

#### Review the Main Ideas

- China's first civilizations formed in river valleys. The Chinese were isolated from other people by mountains and deserts.
- The rulers of the Shang dynasty controlled the area around the Huang He valley.
- The Zhou dynasty replaced the Shang and claimed to rule with the Mandate of Heaven. During the Zhou dynasty, farming methods improved and trade increased.

### What Did You Learn?

1. What is a dynasty?
2. What were oracle bones and how were they used?

#### Critical Thinking

3. **Analyze** How did the Mandate of Heaven allow for the overthrow of kings in ancient China?
4. **Summarizing Information** Draw a diagram like the one below. Add details that describe the members of Shang society.



5. **Evaluate** What were some important technological changes during the Zhou dynasty, and how did they lead to a larger population?
6. **Explain** How did ancient Chinese kings maintain control of their dynasties?
7. **Reading Text Structure** Explain why parentheses are used in the following sentence. “The Huang He (HWAHNG HUH), or Yellow River, flows across China for more than 2,900 miles (4,666 km).”