



# Year 3/4 History Knowledge Organizer : Ancient Civilisations: The Shang Dynasty



## Subject Specific Skills

- The achievements of the earliest civilizations – an overview of where and when the first civilizations appeared and a depth study of one.
- Use a timeline to place and order historical events in chronological order.
- Describe dates and order significant events from the period studied and discuss main changes.
- Use documents, printed sources (e.g. archive materials) the Internet, databases, pictures, photographs, music, artefacts, historic buildings, visits to museums and galleries and visits to sites as evidence about the past.

## Prior Learning

- Use a timeline to place important events.
- Ask questions about the past.
- Understand and use the words past and present when telling others about an event

## Key Vocabulary:

**Bronze** – A strong metal alloy made from copper

**Oracle Bone** – This was heated and cracked by holy men to seek advice from king's ancestors

**Nobles** – Under the ruling family; the highest ranking social class

**Artisans** – Talented group including potters, stonemasons and workers with bronze and jade – Lower than nobles but higher than farmers

**Dynasty** – A sequence of rulers from the same family

**Warlords**– Often ruled areas of land but owed allegiance to the Emperor

**Emperor** – The ruler of a country

**Pagoda** – A religious temple that is built with many towers and tiles.

## Key individuals:

**Tang Shang** (reign. 1675- 1646BCE) (otherwise known as Cheng Tang or Da Yi) was the first King of the Shang Dynasty. He overthrew Jie, who was the last ruler of the Xia Dynasty. Jie had mistreated people through his reign, whilst Tang aimed to unite people. Regarded as a good King, having lowered taxes and spread the dynasty.



**Tai Wu** (reign. 1450- 1375BCE) (also known as Da Wu) was the ninth Shang King. Believed to be the longest reigning of all of the Shang King's staying on the throne for 75 years.

**Lady Fu Hao** (died around 1200BCE) One of the many wives of the King Wu Ding, and (unusual for a woman at the time) was also the military commander. She is said to have been a successful general, leading over 10,000 men, and having won many battles.

**Shangdi** (meaning 'High God' or 'God Above.') Unlike other gods, who were thought to control human affairs and issue, Shangdi was believed to be responsible for larger cosmic and natural events.

**Emperor Zhou** (reign. 1075- 1046BCE) (sometimes known as King Zhou or Di Xin) was the last king of the Shang Dynasty. Although in his early reign he was much admired (he was very strong and intelligent) over time, he became very cruel and reliant on alcohol. He was overthrown by Wu, starting the Zhou Dynasty.

## Timeline

1	2400 BCE	The Bronze Age begins in China.
2	1600 BCE	King Tang overthrows the last emperor of the Xia dynasty. The Shang Dynasty begins.
3	1300 BCE	The capital of the Shang Dynasty moves to Yin
4	1250 BCE - 1192 BCE	Emperor Wu Ding reigns over the Shang Dynasty
5		General Fu Hao leads lots of successful military campaigns.
6	1250 BCE - 1150 BCE	The 'I-Ching' (Book of Changes), a Chinese classic, is written.
7	1046 BCE	The Shang Dynasty is defeated
8	1898	Antique dealers notice Chinese writing on Oracle Bones.
9	1928	Excavations begin in Anyang; many Shang artefacts are found.
10	1976	The tomb of Fu Hao is discovered in



## Key knowledge:

**Shang Social Hierarchy:** Shang society was divided into different classes. At the top were the royal family with peasants and slaves at the bottom.

**Food:** Shang people ate a varied diet. The basic food was millet. Shang farmers grew vegetables and beans. Fish was caught in the river, and some animals were hunted out on the plains.

**Oracle bones:** Oracle bones were bones from an ox shoulder or turtle shells. Questions were carved on these using a sharp tool.

**Religion:** The people of the Shang were polytheistic meaning they worshipped many gods.

**Houses:** Shang people built their homes out of wood and mud. There is evidence they were circular.

**Bronze:** The Shang Dynasty were known for their advanced use of Bronze. Bronze was used for crafts, weapons and everyday items such as pots or utensils.