



Year 6 History Knowledge Organiser: **Ancient Civilizations – Shang Dynasty**



Subject Specific Skills

- Order significant events, movements and dates on a timeline.
- Identify and compare changes within and across different periods.
- Understand how some historical events occurred concurrently in different locations.
- Evaluate evidence to choose the most reliable forms.
- Know that people both in the past have a point of view and that this can affect interpretation.
- Give clear reasons why there may be different accounts of history, linking this to factual understanding of the past.
- 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 to collect evidence about the past.
- Choose reliable sources of evidence to answer questions, realising that there is often not a single answer to historical questions.
- Investigate own lines of enquiry by posing questions to answer.
- Communicate ideas about from the past using different genres of writing, drawing, diagrams, data-handling, drama, storytelling and using ICT.
- Plan and present a self-directed project or research about the studied period.

Prior Learning

Ancient Egypt – in-depth study of an ancient civilization.

Maya Civilization – focus on landscape and quality of life/trade during those times.

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. It is thought that, as a young king, he was alarmed by two very quickly-growing trees in his palace.
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.

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 as a tower with many tiers and roofs

Timeline:

Date	Key Event
c.1675BCE	Tang overthrows Jie of the Xia Dynasty. The Shang Dynasty begins.
c.1500BCE	Large scale Bronze production begins. This is the start of the Bronze Age in China.
1450-1375BCE	King Tai Wu rules the Shang Dynasty for around 75 years.
1450BCE	The capital city of the Shang Dynasty is Yin, although this is later moved.
1300BCE	Pan Geng rules. He has many enemies, and has to move his capital city.
1200BCE	Lady Hao dies, and is buried with many worldly treasures.

The Shang Dynasty, also known as the Yin Dynasty, ruled the Yellow River Valley in the second millennium BCE (approx 1675-1046BCE).

The Shang Dynasty succeeded the Xia Dynasty and was followed by the Zhou Dynasty. It was the first Chinese Dynasty for which there is written and archaeological evidence.

The Dynasty expanded its territory and moved its capital city on several occasions; it has become famous for the artistry of its bronze and jade work.



Key Knowledge:

Life in the Shang Dynasty

THE UPPER CLASSES		Shang society was divided into different classes. At the top were the royal family, and then priests and administrative classes. Members of the aristocracy were well-respected, and had clothes made from the finest materials. They were often given the responsibility of governing small areas.	Did you know? Warriors were able to join the upper classes. The more successful they were in battle, the higher they could rise!
THE LOWER CLASSES		Life was very different for peasants, who were at the bottom of the social ladder. The majority of the population was in this bracket were limited to farming crops and selling handmade items for a profit. Some lower classes were buried with their masters, leading archaeologists to believe they were slaves.	Did you know? Peasants were governed by local aristocrats, and had little hope of leaving their life of peasantry.
FOOD		Shang people ate a varied diet! The basic food was millet, a type of grain, but barley and wheat were also grown. Shang farmers were also skilled, growing vegetables and beans. Fish were caught in the rivers, and some animals (for example deer and bears) were hunted out on the plains.	Did you know? The people of the Shang Dynasty also kept domesticated animals, such as pigs, dogs, goats and sheep.
ORACLE BONES		Oracle bones were bones from ox shoulder blades or turtle shells, upon which questions were carved using a sharp tool. It was believed that the gods were able to read these questions. These oracle bones now offer some of the first-known examples of writing from ancient civilizations.	Did you know? Examples of question topics were about the weather, the result of battles, and the gender of babies.
RELIGION		The people of the Shang Dynasty were polytheistic, meaning that they worshipped many gods. The main god was Shangdi. They also believed in an afterlife, and so they were buried with the goods, animals, and slaves that they would need.	Did you know? Some slaves are thought to have been killed, in order to accompany their masters in the afterlife.
HOUSES		The Shang people built their houses out of wood and mud. There is evidence that some of these were circular. They also built mud banks in order to try and hold back flooding. Their defensive walls and towers were also built out of mud.	Did you know? Most houses had pounded earth foundations and timber frames.
BRONZE		The Shang Dynasty is well-known for its advanced use of Bronze in comparison – as such it is often known as the 'Bronze Age' in China. Bronze was used for crafts, weapons, and everyday items such as cooking utensils and pots. The use of Bronze continued into the age of the Zhou Dynasty.	Did you know? Many artefacts survive until this day, and can sell for enormous sums of money!