

[Ancient China – manuscript]

[p.1 - title page]

[Series title] China Focus

[Book title] Ancient China

[author]

[Heinemann Library logo]

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Some words are printed in bold, like this. You can find out what they mean by looking in the glossary.

[pp. 4-5],

[A] Amazing and Ancient!

China is a huge country in Asia, about 9.5 million sq miles (15 million sq km).

It is so big that different areas have very different climates. They range from cold, dry deserts to hot, humid rain forests. People first started to settle in China in river valleys with rich soil that was good for farming.

The Chinese **civilization** began more than 5,000 years ago. It is older than any other civilization in the world today. The ancient Chinese had many new ideas in science, arts, and learning. Their inventions include paper, math, and

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fireworks. European merchants traveled long distances to buy Chinese products and sell them in their own countries.

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People in other Asian countries wanted goods made in China as well. Many countries also took on Chinese culture, adding Chinese beliefs and practices to their own ways of life. This book covers the time from the earliest settlements in China and explores the amazing stories, beliefs, art, inventions, and discoveries that ancient China has given us.

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[pp. 6-7]

[A] Clans to Kingdoms

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People first lived in China about 500,000 years ago. They hunted and then farmed along the Huang He ("hwong hee") River. At first, early Chinese people created small villages of about 300 people living in 50 to 100 houses. These people lived in large family groups, called clans. Small villages of up to 50 houses usually had only one clan. Bigger villages had two or three clans.

The early Chinese farmed, fished, and kept animals. From about 2500 BCE, some villages were built with earth walls around them. Archeologists think that the villagers started to fight each other, trying to take more land. A wall around the village would protect the people who lived there when they were attacked.

[C] The Huang He River also is called the Yellow River.

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[Insert Figure 1]

[Caption] Archeologists have found the bones of people who lived about 500,000 years ago. This picture shows what the whole skull of a person named "Beijing Man" looked like.

B Dynasties

Kings and emperors started to rule different parts of ancient China. They were organized into **dynasties**. Most dynasties were made up of powerful families. These families joined together with other families in the area. They agreed to help protect each other against enemies.

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C China's dynasties

During its long history, China was ruled by several dynasties. Early on, different families ruled in different parts of the country, so some of them were powerful at the same time as other dynasties. Later on, only one dynasty at a time ruled the whole country.

1700-1500 BCE - Xia Dynasty

1600-1050 BCE - Shang Dynasty

1050-256 BCE - Zhou ('joh') Dynasty

221-206 BCE - Qin ('chin') Dynasty

206 BC - 220 CE - Han Dynasty

220-589 CE - Six dynasties period

581-618 CE - Sui ('sway') Dynasty

618-907 CE - Tang ('tahng') Dynasty

907-960 CE - Five dynasties period

960-1279 CE - Song ('soong') Dynasty

1280-1368 CE - Yuan ('yoo-en') Dynasty

1368-1644 CE - Ming Dynasty

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1644-1912 CE - Qing ('ching') Dynasty

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[B] The Xia Dynasty 1700-1500 BCE

For years, no one was sure that the Xia Dynasty existed. Chinese myths and stories existed about the Xia, but no physical evidence. Then, in 1959, archeologists found objects from the Xia Dynasty.

Historians now believe the Xia Dynasty ruled part of China from 1700 to 1500 BCE. The Xia were farmers who used bronze weapons. They also made pottery and prayed to spirits to help them.

[Insert Figure 2]

[Caption] Objects found in 1959 led to the discovery of the Xia Dynasty.

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[pp. 8-9]

[B] The Shang Dynasty 1600-1050 BCE

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The Shang Dynasty became powerful after the Xia. Shang rulers controlled a large area of northeastern China from about 1600 to 1050 BCE.

The Shang used several technologies to conquer more lands. Bronze weapons helped them take land from people who still used stone weapons. The Shang also used chariots, giving their armies extra speed and power.

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Another important technology was writing. The Shang were not the first Chinese people to have writing, but they made the writing system better.

[B] Religious leaders

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Shang Dynasty rulers also were religious leaders. The Shang people believed that their kings could talk to their ancestors. They worshipped the Shang Di, a god whom they believed controlled other gods, such as the gods

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of the sun, moon, wind, and rain.

[Insert Figure 3]

[Caption] The Shang bronze workers were far more skilled than any other bronze workers in the world at that time.

[B] Royal tombs

Shang rulers showed their power by building special **tombs**. They made thousands of people dig huge holes in the ground and build large burial rooms out of wood. Other workers spent months creating the pottery, **jade**, bronze, and other objects that went into the **tombs**.

About 30 kings ruled throughout the Shang **Dynasty**. The last king, Di Xin, did not take care of his people well. He took money from them and did not protect them. He lost control and was defeated by the Zhou **Dynasty**.

[C] Oracle bones

To speak to their ancestors, Shang rulers used oracle bones. These were animal bones, often from an ox or part of a turtle shell. When the king asked his ancestor a question, a priest pressed a hot poker into a spot on the bone. The answer – yes or no – depended on how the bone cracked. On many of these bones, the priest wrote down the question and then the answer.

[Insert Figure 4]

[Caption] This bone has writing from the Shang **Dynasty** on it.

[pp. 10-11]

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