



T 10: Ancient China
From Neolithic Culture to Zhou Dynasty

Ancient China

- Two river basins: **Huang He** (aka **Yellow River**) in the North and **Yangzi** in Central and Southern China – most fertile agricultural areas
- **Millet** (a cereal grain) in the North and **rice** in the South
- Protected by natural barriers like mountains, deserts, rivers



Timeline

- **Neolithic Age** (c.5000 BCE)
- Bronze Age and **Dynastic Rule:**
- **Shang Dynasty** (c. 1600- 1045 BCE)
- **Zhou Dynasty**- (c. 1045 – 771 BCE)
- **Han Dynasty** (c.206 BCE – 221 CE)

Neolithic China

- Remains of developed Neolithic Age from C. 5000 BCE found
- Two prominent centers – Yangshaw and Banpo villages in North-West China
- Known as **Yangshaw Culture**
- Agriculture based on **millet** – practiced **crop rotation**
- Made fine pottery with designs – without potter's wheel
- Domestic animals (pigs, dogs, cattle...)

Millet



Yangshaw Pottery



China in Early Bronze Age

- **Shang State** (1600-1045 BCE) – first Bronze Age civilization
- A Territorial State (not out of City States)
- **Theocracy** – the king was also the chief priest -**Ancestor Worshipping** practiced
- Inscriptions on **Oracle Bones - Divination**
- Overthrown by the **Zhou Dynasty** c.1046 BCE

Shang Dynasty Ritual Wine Vessels



Oracle Bones



The Zhou Empire

- Continued Shang way of dynastic rule, loose central control and **ancestor worshipping**
- Power based on **Mandate of Heaven** (Heaven's approval) – legitimized regime change – conditional **Divine Right** to rule

Zhou Empire (Contd.)

- Developed civilization – construction of dikes and irrigation systems, canal digging
- Planted the seeds of a durable state through **Good Governance**
- Western (1045-771 BCE) followed by Eastern Zhou Empire that ended in 221 BCE
- Never became a regional power - **integration** rather than **unification**
- Zhou rule considered a **golden age** – a model for later rulers

Zhou Achievements

- Built roads and expanded foreign trade
- Obtained horses, formed **Cavalry, chariots**
- Further developed the system of writing
- Development of agriculture – iron ploughs, improved irrigation and flood control system
- Began the process of integrating diverse peoples and territories

Study questions

- What Neolithic cultures emerged in ancient China?
- What was the first territorial state in China?
- Why was ancestor worshipping practiced in ancient China?
- What is 'Oracle Bone'?
- How did the Zhou rulers justify their takeover of power from the Shang Dynasty?
- Why is the Zhou period known as a 'golden age' in ancient Chinese history?
- What were the achievements of the Zhou dynasty?

Thank You