



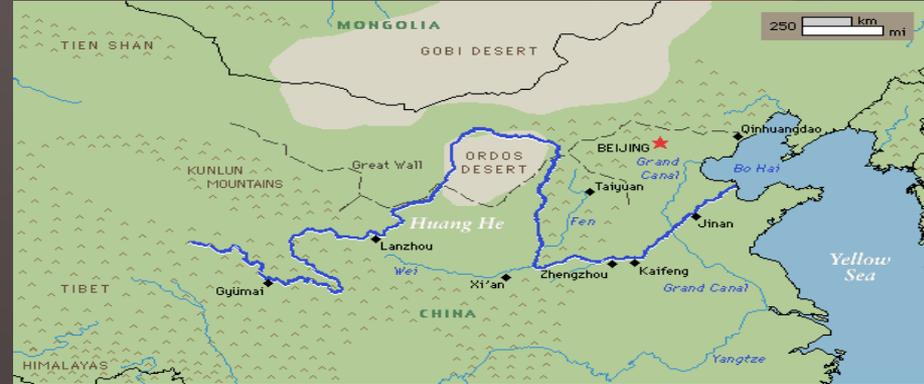
Ancient China

Shang to Zhou Dynasties
(1766 BCE – 256 BCE)



Geography

- Geographical features (mountains and deserts) **isolated** China from world
 - Himalayas
 - Taklimakan Desert
 - Gobi Desert
- **Huang He River** : “Yellow River,” one of the first occupied regions in China due to its favorable climate for agriculture.
- Loess
 - Violent, unpredictable flooding



Dynastic Longevity

- Chinese civilization was one of the earliest on Earth, and **developed almost 4000 years ago.**
- Like Ancient Egypt, ruled by **royal dynasties** (In China, these dynasties lasted until 1911 CE)
- Dynastic rule was based on the **Mandate of Heaven**, a principle that a ruler and his family were given “permission” from the gods if they governed properly.

Predynastic China (ca. 8000 – 2200 BCE)

- **Yangshao Culture** (5000-2700 BCE)
 - Agricultural Society
 - crops: millet, wheat, rice
 - animals: dogs, pigs, goats, horses, chickens
 - Small Villages (**Ban-Po-T'sun**)
 - Located in river valleys along the Huang He
 - Enclosed by earthen defensive walls



○ Longshan Cultures (3500 – 2200 BCE)



○ Differences from Yangshao Culture:

- Agriculture: also had **cattle** and **sheep**
- Technology: **pottery wheel** (easier to make pottery of better quality)
- **Evidence of ancestor worship:** burials under or inside foundations of homes
- Evidence of an **early legal code**

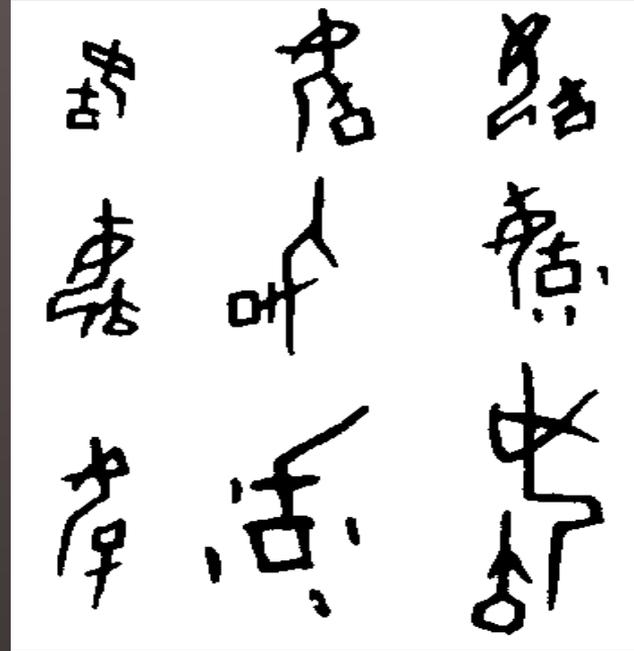


Shang Dynasty

- China's first documented dynasty (ca. 1766 to 1027 BCE).
- The Shang are generally considered the **first great Chinese civilization**.
- **First writing** in China
 - **Character writing** – each symbol represents a sound, word, or object
 - Started on “**oracle bones**” (fortune telling)



- High level of technology:
 - **bronze metallurgy**
 - **silk** weaving
 - complex **pottery**
 - monumental architecture
- Distinct social hierarchy
 - **Nobility**: royalty, government officials, priests, etc.
 - **Commoners**: artisans, dependent farmers, etc.
 - Slaves







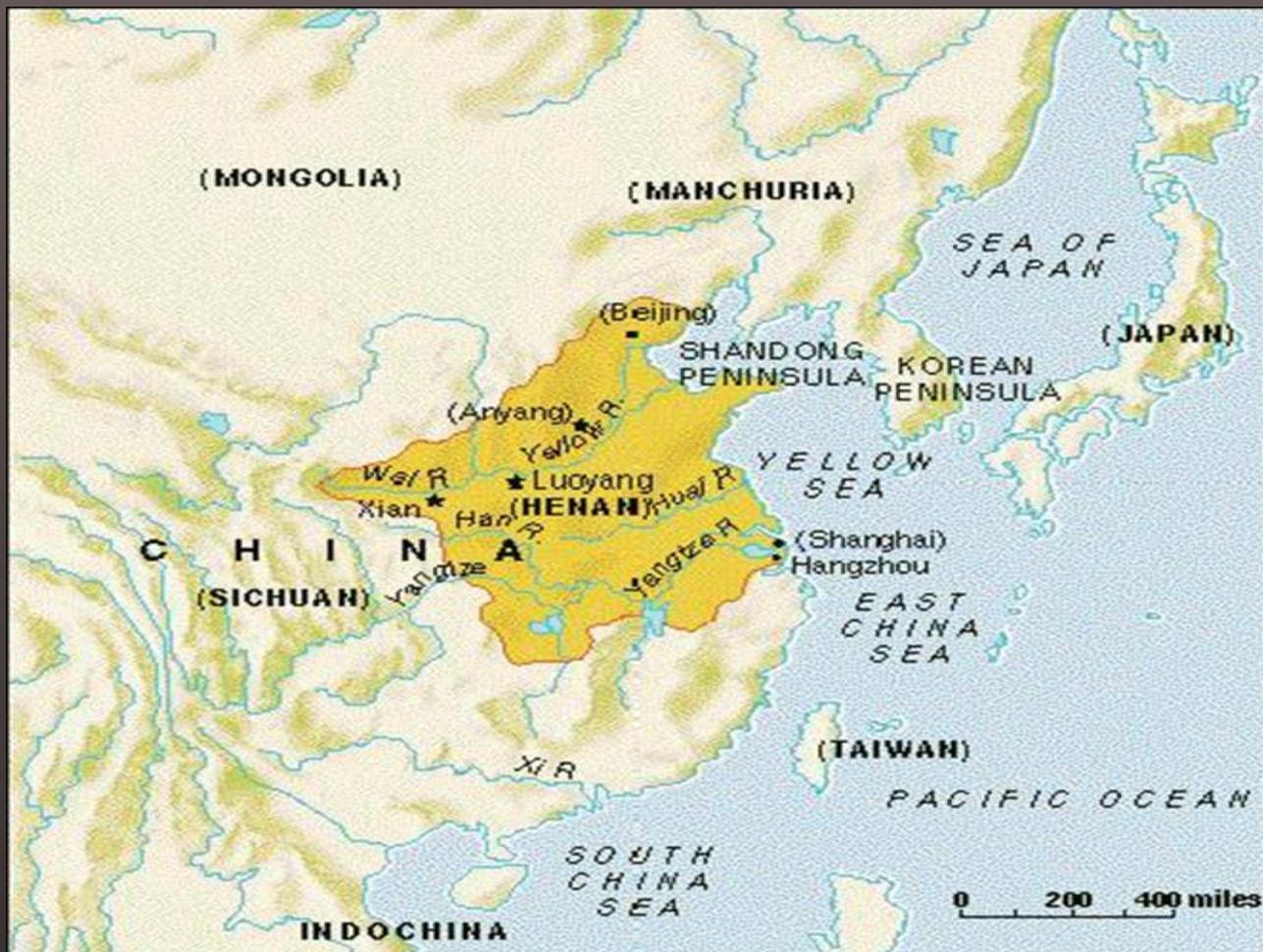
○ Government:

- **King** (NOT emperor) led government from a capital city
- King's relatives ruled other cities in the name of the king
- Palaces for royalty in the cities

○ Religion:

- **Theocratic Monarchy:** King also led religion
- Very elaborate tombs for kings and nobility
- Temples in cities
- Divination (oracle bones)
- Polytheistic faith, based on nature spirits and ancestor worship





Zhou Dynasty (1029 – 256 BCE)

- **Culture/Society:**

- very similar to life during Shang Dynasty, not many changes

- **Government:**

- also very similar to that of Shang Dynasty
- BUT! One major difference – more centralized control by the king
- **Mandate of Heaven** used to justify rule

- **Agricultural system**

- became somewhat **feudalistic** in later years – “**Well-Field System**”

- This dynasty lost power and decentralized due to

- ineffective rulers
- too large a territory to effectively rule
- Feudalism – increased power of local elite families

private

private

private

private

public

private

private

private

private