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ANCIENT CHINESE DIPLOMACY

The Chou and Zhou dynasty are the ancient Chinese dynasties. China was ruled by the Chou or Zhou dynasty from about 1027 to about 221 B.C. This was the longest dynasty in Chinese history and the time of the development of much of ancient Chinese culture.

After the second Chinese dynasty, the Shang, the Chou Dynasty followed. The Chou, originally pastoralists, developed a (proto-)feudal social organization centered on administrative-bureaucratic families. They established a middle class, as well. Anyway at the beginning of the decentralized tribal structure, the Zhou became centralised over time. Iron was added, and the emergence of Confucianism. Sun Tzu also wrote The Art of War during that long period, in around 500 B.C.

The Philosophers of China and Religion

A class of scholars, whose members included the great Chinese philosopher Confucius, established during the warring states period within the Chou dynasty. During the Chou Dynasty The Book of Changes was written. The philosopher Lao Tse was appointed librarian for the Chou kings' historical documents. Often, this period is called the One Hundred School Anniversary.

The Chou prohibited sacrifice on human beings. They regarded their dominance over the Shang as a manda.

The Chou Family Ends

Wuwang ("Warrior King") was the son of the Chou (Zhou) king, who were based in what is now Shaanxi province on the western frontier of Shang's China. Wuwang has formed an alliance with other state leaders to overthrow the Shang's last, evil emperor. They succeeded and Wuwang became the Chou dynasty's first king (c.1046-43 B.C.).

The Chou Family Split

The Chou dynasty is conventionally divided into Western or Royal Chou periods (c.1027 to 771 B.C.) and Dong or Eastern Chou periods (c.770 to 221 B.C.); The Dong Zhou itself is subdivided into the period Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu) (c.770 to 476 B.C.), named after a Book allegedly by Confucius and when iron weapons and agricultural tools replaced bronze, and Warring States (Zhanguo) era (c.475 to 221 B.C.).

During the beginning of Western Chou, the Chou Empire stretched from Shaanxi to the Shandong Peninsula and the Beijing area. The Chou dynasty's first Kings gave land to friends and relatives. Unlike the two preceding dynasties, a respected leader passed control to his descendants. Walled towns of the vassals, even patriarchally handed down, grew into kingdoms. The central government had lost all but nominal control by the end of the Western Chou, as was required for rituals.

The aristocratic method of warfare changed during the Warring States period: peasants fought; new weapons were available, including crossbows, chariots, and iron armour.

Evolutions During the Chou Dynasty

Ox-drawn plows, casting iron and iron, horseback riding, coinage, multiplication tables, chopsticks, and the crossbow were introduced during the Chou dynasty in China. They have built highways, canals and major irrigation projects.

Legalism evolved during a time of the Warring States. Legalism is a school of philosophy which provided the philosophical context for Qin Dynasty, the first imperial dynasty. Legalism acknowledged that individuals are imperfect, and believed that this should be understood by democratic institutions. The state should therefore be totalitarian, requiring absolute loyalty to the leader, and enforcing defined rewards and punishments.

The dynasty of Zhou (Chou Dynasty) succeeded the dynasty of Shang and lasted from 1050 B.C, by most reckonings. 256 B.C. It ruled parts of northern China and controlled a greater region than the Shang, but under it feudal states had a great deal of control over their own affairs. The Zhou came from the Shaanxi Province which is now. They came to power after Emperor Wen led a rebellion against the kingdom of Shang. His son Emperor Wu was the first official emperor of Zhou. Zhou emperors were rulers of the priests who called themselves "Sons of Heaven" with a "Mandate from Heaven" to rule.

University of Washington's Patricia Buckley Ebrey wrote: "In about 1050 B.C. The Shang dynasty was defeated in battle by armies from Zhou, a rival state to the west that seems to have both adopted cultural practices from the Northwest Neolithic civilizations and absorbed the bulk of the Shang's material culture. The conquerors maintained their residence in the Valley of the Wei River in the present province of Shaanxi and divided the rest of its territory between its families and local rulers, establishing a variety of local courts or principalities.

The Zhou Dynasty (1050–256 B.C.) period is divided into: 1) the Western Zhou — (1050–771 B.C.); 2) Eastern Zhou — (771–256 B.C.); 3) Spring and Autumn Period — (770–475 B.C.); and 4) Warring States Period — (475–221 B.C.). There are some variations in the dates. [Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art]

The last Shang ruler, a despot according to standard Chinese accounts, was overthrown by a chieftain of a frontier tribe called Zhou, which had settled in the Wei Valley in modern Shaanxi Province. The Zhou dynasty had its capital at Hao, near present-day Xian, or Chang'an, as it was known in its heyday in the imperial period. Sharing the language and culture of the Shang, the early Zhou rulers, through conquest and colonization, gradually sinicized, that is, extended Shang culture through much of China Proper north of the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River). The Zhou dynasty lasted longer than any other. It was philosophers of this period who first enunciated the doctrine of the "mandate of heaven" (tianming), the notion that the ruler (the "son of heaven") governed by divine right but that his dethronement would prove that he had lost the mandate. The doctrine explained and justified the demise of the two earlier dynasties and at the same time supported the legitimacy of present and future rulers. [Source: The Library of Congress]

The Zhou period was by no means a unified period of history. The first three centuries of Zhou rule were relatively peaceful. Around 800 B.C. feudal states under the Zhou began fighting among themselves for prominence. During the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-221 B.C.) period, Chinese culture spread eastward to the Yellow Sea and southward to the Yangtze. Large feudal states on the fringes of the empire fought among themselves for supremacy but recognized the pre-eminence of the Zhou emperor, the Son of Heaven, who performed a largely ceremonial role. Beginning in the 7th century B.C. the authority of the emperors degenerated and hundred of warlords fought among themselves until seven major kingdoms prevailed. This led to the formulation of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. The Spring and Autumn period (771-482 B.C.), the Warring States period (481-221 B.C.) and the Age of Philosophers (6th century to 3rd century B.C.) occurred within the Eastern Zhou Dynasty.

Decline of Shang Dynasty and Rise of the Zhou

Weakened by corruption and decay, the Shang dynasty was overpowered in 1050-25 B.C. by the Zhou to the west that also knew how to effectively use horses, chariots and composite bows. The 29th and final Shang king, Di Xin, was known for his indulgences, appetites and whims. He reportedly hosted orgiastic parties around a palace pool filled with wine and ordered those who displeased him to be taken away and executed. Historians doubt the veracity of these tales, namely because they come from Zhou and Han dynasty sources, which likely portrayed dynasties before them as evil to make themselves look good.

According to the National Palace Museum, Taipei: "It is recorded that when the army of King Chou (the last Shang ruler) was defeated, the king donned his shaman vestment sewn with many small jade animal figurines and committed suicide by fire. The king, who also held the position of chief shaman, may have hoped that the essential vital force of the jade and the power of the animals represented in this precious mineral would help his spirit find its way to heaven.

Mandate of Heaven

The Zhou emperors were the first to evoke the Mandate from Heaven — the axiom that noble and wise leaders ruled in accordance with the wishes of heaven while corrupt leaders were

replaced — to justify their power over their vassals, who in turn evoked the same mandate to justify their control over the landowners below them. The Mandate from Heaven was the glue that held China together during a period otherwise marked by a great deal of fighting between vassals.

Early Chinese monarchs were both priests and kings. The Chinese people believed that their rulers were chosen to lead with a "mandate of heaven" — also seen as a Chinese belief that a dynasty was ordained to rule, based on its demonstrated ability to do so. It was a kind of political legitimacy based on the notion that the overthrow of ruler was justified if the ruler became wicked, lost the trust of the people or double-crossed the supreme being. Patricia Buckley Ebrey of the University of Washington wrote: "A king and a dynasty could rule only so long as they retained heaven's favor. If a king neglected his sacred duties and acted tyrannically, heaven would display its displeasure by sending down ominous portents and natural disasters."

The "mandate of heaven" was first adopted during the Zhou Dynasty and was described as a divine right to rule. The philosopher Mencius (372-289 B.C.) wrote about it at length and framed it in both moral and cosmic terms, stating that if a ruler was just and carried out the prescribed rituals to the ancestors then his rule and the cosmic, natural and human order would be maintained.

Later the mandate idea was incorporated into the Taoist concept that the collapse of a dynasty was preceded by "Disapprovals of heaven," natural disasters such as great earthquakes, floods or fires and these were often preceded by certain cosmic signs. According to these beliefs on September 8, 2040 five planets will gather within the space of fewer than degrees "signaling the conferral of heaven's mandate." The legendary emperors did not need to govern at all because the moral certitude that emanated from them was enough to bring about peace and prosperity. One ruler is said to have done nothing but reverently face the south.

Conflict in the Zhou Period

According to the National Palace Museum, Taipei: "During the late Western Zhou, political and economical changes led to conflicts between the Zhou King and his nobles, resulting in the exile of King Li. Power fell into the hands of the nobles until the restoration of King Xuan. Thus King Li does not enjoy a favorable opinion in history. Three bronzes commissioned by King Li are currently known, including the bronze zhong bell of Zong Zhou.

"Skirmishes between the Zhou and the northwestern tribes were frequent during the late Western Zhou, such as the repelling of the Guifang described in the engraving of the bronze ding cauldron of Shi Tong. However, the heartland of Zong Zhou was bereft of natural barriers. By the time of King You, political instability provided an opening for the Quanrong to overrun the royal domain of Guanzhong, leading to the fall of Zong Zhou.

References.

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