

## Significant People in The Shang Dynasty

The Shang Dynasty governed ancient China from around 1600 BC to 1046 BC and left a remarkable legacy, shaped significantly by its key individuals.

King Tang was the dynasty's founder, overthrowing the corrupt Xia ruler, Jie, to establish Shang rule. Tang was celebrated for his benevolent governance — reducing taxes, caring for the poor, and ruling with a sense of moral responsibility. His reign set the standard against which future Shang kings were measured.

The most extraordinary individual of the era is arguably Fu Hao, a wife of King Wu Ding. In a deeply patriarchal society, Fu Hao defied convention entirely. She commanded armies numbering over 10,000 troops, led successful military campaigns against the Tu, Ba, and Yi tribes, and served as a high priestess conducting state rituals. The 1976 excavation of her intact tomb revealed over 200 bronze vessels, 750 jade objects, ivory carvings, and oracle bones inscribed with her name — confirming her unique historical significance.

King Wu Ding, reigning approximately 59 years, is regarded as the Shang's most accomplished king. He revitalised the empire through strategic military expansion and recruited exceptional talent, including Fu Hao herself.

Oracle bone diviners formed another influential group, interpreting cracks in heated ox bones and turtle shells to communicate with royal ancestors and guide state decisions.

Together, these figures illustrate how power, religion, and gender intersected in one of China's earliest civilisations.

## Questions

1. Who was the corrupt ruler that King Tang overthrew?
2. Give two examples of how King Tang governed benevolently.
3. What does the term "patriarchal society" mean in the context of the article?
4. Name two of the tribes that Fu Hao led military campaigns against.
5. What roles did Fu Hao hold within Shang society?
6. How many jade objects were found in Fu Hao's tomb?
7. What is the significance of Fu Hao's name appearing on oracle bones?
8. Why is King Wu Ding considered the Shang's most accomplished king?
9. What was the purpose of oracle bone divination?
10. The article says Fu Hao "defied convention entirely." Using evidence from the text, explain what this means and why it is significant.



Text D Quiz



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