

The Shang Dynasty

Learning Objective:

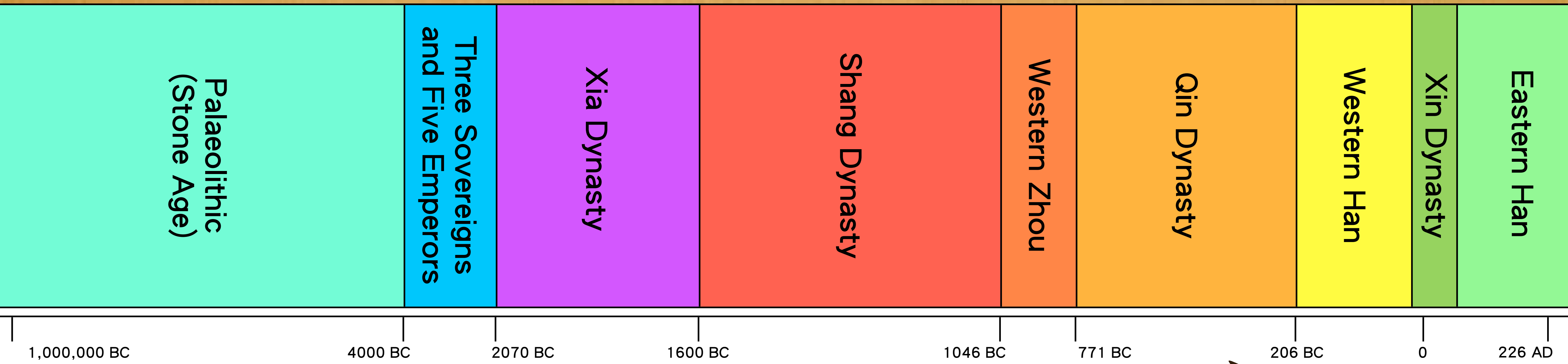
To explore the evidence surrounding the Shang kings.





Can you remember when
the Shang Dynasty were in
power?

The Shang Dynasty were in power from around 1600 BC until 1046 BC. This was during the Bronze Age.



Did you get that right?



Around 200 BC, lists of the Shang rulers were written in history books. This list shows the first nine Shang rulers as listed in these books:

1st King	Da Yi (Tang the Great)
2nd King	Wai Bing
3rd King	Zhong Ren
4th King	Tai Jia
5th King	Wo Ding
6th King	Tai Geng
7th King	Xiao Jia
8th King	Yong Ji
9th King	Tai Wu

How accurate do you think this list is? Why?



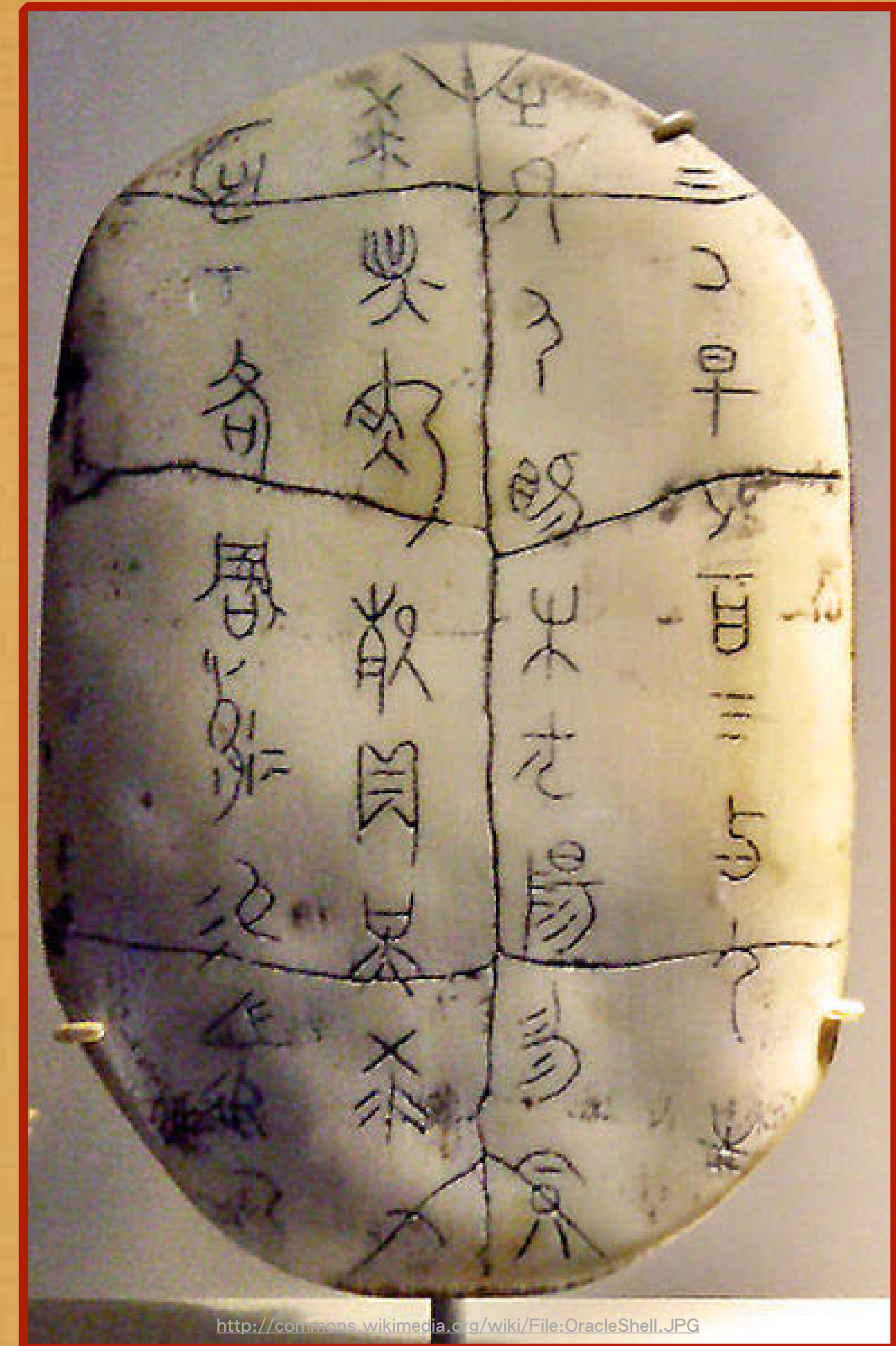
Until the discovery of the oracle bones, the only evidence for the Shang Dynasty was written in books that were written centuries after the Shang Dynasty ended.

When the oracle bones were discovered, they confirmed some of the details that were written in the history books, proving that the Shang Dynasty and its rulers had existed.



What were oracle bones?

Oracle bones were made of the shoulder blades of large animals, such as oxen, or turtle shells. They were used by kings and diviners to answer questions and tell the future.



<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OracleShell.JPG>

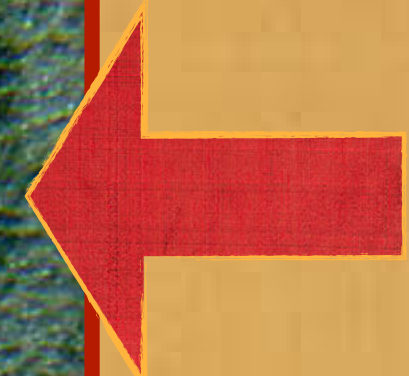


This is a replica of a turtle shell oracle.

The diviner wrote a question on the oracle bone, then drilled pits into it. He would then put a red-hot poker into the pit until the bone cracked. The diviner would then read the cracks to interpret the answer to the question.



This oracle bone is asking if it will rain today.



What other questions do you think a king might want to ask the oracle bones?



Because the oracle bones were used by kings to help them predict the future, they contain a lot of information about the kings of the Shang Dynasty. Some of the information matched that in the history books but some did not.



Which evidence do you think is more reliable? Why?