

Xia Dynasty

According to legend there was a Xia dynasty before the Shang. In the 1960s and 70s, archaeologists uncovered urban sites, bronze implements and tombs that point to the existence of a Xia dynasty in the same areas as cited in Chinese historical texts. However, unlike the Shang dynasty, no written records from the period have been found to confirm the existence of the Xia.

The Xia dynasty was said to have begun with the reign of Yu the Great. Yu the Great is best remembered for his battle against flooding. The story goes that a flood inundated the Yellow River Valley. The King at the time ordered Yu to control it. He worked for 13 years, building drainage channels and other projects to stop the flood. Another story tells that the God of Rivers gave Yu a map so that he was able to create his first flood-control plan.

The Dynasty lasted for more than 400 years, from around 2200BC to 1700 B.C. It is believed that the last ruler of the Xia, Jie, increased oppression and abused his power. The people could no longer tolerate his despotism and fled in large numbers. The Shang were able to take advantage of the Xia's weakness, and overthrew the Dynasty.