

Reading

Activity 4

Answer the questions below about ancient Chinese cities. All the answers can be found by reading the pages below carefully (remember your retrieval skills)

1) Who was the first Shang King?

2) What was the last city of the Shang settlement?

3) How were the shrines protected?

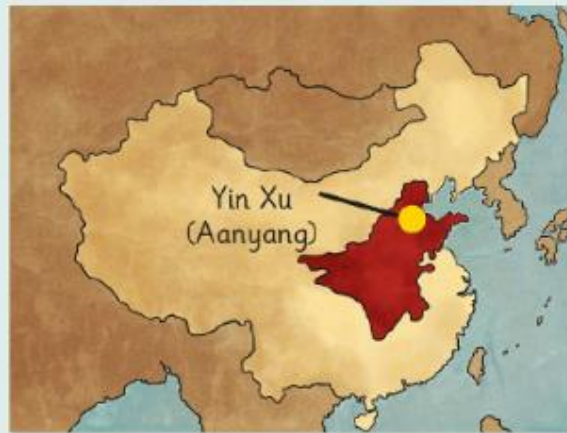
4) Why are the remains so hard to find?

Shang Cities

Just like the people, very little is actually known about Shang buildings as not much has remained and we can only find evidence of its architecture under the ground.

The city of Shang was thought to have been built by the first Shang king, Tang. This city was surrounded by walls 10m tall and 20m in width!

Foundations of Shang buildings were made by laying heavy planks of wood on top of the soil, which was then pounded repeatedly to compact it. Once hard enough, the plank would be moved and another layer of soil would be added on top. This was repeated over and over until the foundation was high enough. Such a foundation would have probably taken 10,000 workers over a time of 18 years to complete!



Yin Xu

The city of Yin was the largest and last city of Shang settlement. It was established by the nineteenth Shang king, Pan Geng at around 1300 BCE. Shang rule of this city carried on for over 250 years before it was abandoned. 'Yin Xu' means 'ruins of Yin'.

Unlike the buildings from the Han Dynasty (second century BC), it is believed that the Shang had thatched roofs rather than tiled (below).



Shang Buildings

The city of Yin was a bit different to other early Shang capitals built because of the fact that it was not surrounded by huge walls all around. The central palaces and shrines at Yin were protected by small buildings built around them.

Shang buildings were made mostly of wood and clay, instead of stone like the Egyptians or Greeks, which is another reason why remains are much harder to find.

Timber frames were placed on top of wooden posts that were hammered into the dense earth foundations. The roofs were then thatched with thick, hard straw. Main halls were situated to the front of the buildings with bedrooms at the back.

Another Shang city was uncovered in 1999 at modern day Huanbei. Its foundations were very similar to those in Yin and a 170m courtyard area was also found.



The Forbidden City

The Forbidden city in China today was built in the fifteenth century and is proof that the basic shape of Chinese architecture remained popular and unchanged for many centuries.