

Merchants and Craftsmen: Since this group did not produce food and were not part of the nobility, they were outside the class structure. Like slaves, they were hardly considered men. In times of war, when the city was attacked, they were not taken inside the protective walls, but were left to fend for themselves as best they could.

Religion: Their gods were the gods of nature, the river god, the rain god, the earth god. They believed in many gods, but the most powerful was the sky god, the king of gods. If you asked someone in ancient China in what gods did they believe, they would probably say the proper and seasonable worship of the gods of the rivers and mountains, and wind and moon, and of our noble ancestors. Many of the celebrations and festivals that honor these ancient gods are still celebrated by the Chinese today. Honoring gods and ancestors was very much a part of ancient Chinese daily life.

Mandate of Heaven: When the Chou overthrew the last Shang king, they had to convince the people, especially the nobles, that they had the right to rule. The Chou invented the Mandate of Heaven. They told people that Heaven (T'ien) had decided to appoint them rulers, but only if they were good rulers. If they became selfish, Heaven would withdraw support, and the Chou rule would be over. Heaven would appoint a new leader. Who knows if the nobles believed this fairy tale, but it sounded like a good idea.

Spring Festival: The Spring Festival was still important. At about age 15, children from several villages would gather. Unlike the nobles, marriages were rarely arranged. Boys and girls met each other at the Spring Festival, where they found husbands and wives.

Quick Shang and Chou Times History Note

Shang Dynasty 1700 B.C.E. to 1100 B.C.E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The kingship was very odd. Instead of going from father to son, it went from brother to brother or from brother to nephew. <i>Contributions:</i> Two of the most important contributions of the Shang Dynasty are the use of bronze and a system of writing.
Chou/Zhou Dynasty 1100 B.C.E. to 250 B.C.E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This dynasty was divided into feudal states. The Zhou family was technically in charge, but the real power was in the hands of the feudal lords. Literature flourished. People studied astronomy. Roads and canals were built to move supplies over long distances. <i>Contributions:</i> Two of the most important contributions of the Zhou Dynasty are the introduction of Taoism and Confucianism