

CHINESE RELIGIONS: CLASS OUTLINE 1

ANCIENT CHINESE RELIGION

Common Characteristics of the Sinic World: (1) shared staple food
(2) shared manner of eating
(3) shared medium of communication

[Léon Vandermeersch, *Le Nouveau monde sinisé* (1986)]

Chinese Names for China: (1) “All Under Heaven” (天下 [tiānxià])
(2) “Middle Kingdom” (中國 [Zhōngguó])

Prehistory: Peking Man (*Sinanthropus pekinensis*) during the Pleistocene age.

5000 BCE: Neolithic Age

Divination

Ancestor Worship

Historical Timeline: (1) Mythic
(2) Semi-historical
(3) Historical

Shang 商 [Shāng] Dynasty (1751-1123 BCE)

Oracle Bone Inscriptions (甲骨文) [jiǎgǔwén]

	← hot metal = crack the bones	→ professional diviner reads it.
		The cracked bones are kept as records
V		(writings on bone = inscribed after the divination
		– indicate outcome)

Ancestor worship

Most High Ruler – Shang-ti (上帝 Shàngdì)

Chou 周 [Zhōu] Dynasty (1122-249 BC) Dynasty

“Heaven” T’ien (天) [tiān]

Ancestor worship

Communication with spirits: (1) Divination using milfoil/yarrow plants

(2) Shamanism: 2 kinds: (a) “hsien”: 仙

(b) “wu”: 巫

“Scholars” 儒 [rú]