

C. Connecting to China's Ancient Past

1. The Chinese government decided recently to try to revive China's ancient past as a symbol of national pride. The government created the *Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project* to study the three most ancient dynasties of China's history, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties.
2. The project resulted in the creation of an official Chinese history stretching back to **approximately 2200 BC**.

D. c.2200 BC: The Founding of the Xia Dynasty as a Cardinal Anchor Fact

1. The beginning of the Xia dynasty is a story that reveals some important Chinese beliefs about government that have continued to be upheld as a tradition until this very day. This allows it to serve as an anchor fact of Chinese culture.
2. The Xia dynasty is said to have begun when the ruler of China at the time, King Shun, passed on power *not* to his son but to one of his ministers named Yu (who was *not* a member of Shun's family).
3. Yu was chosen by Shun because he had proven his desire and ability to serve the needs of China's farmers by building dams and canals as a way to cope with the flooding of the Yellow river.
4. The story of King Yu has always been considered important to the Chinese. It shows how they believe in *benevolent despotism*. (A “despot” is a person who has absolute power. A “benevolent” ruler is one who wishes his people well, and strives to serve them.)
5. In **⌘1978**, when Deng Xiaoping granted permission to his people to trade with the world, he was acting as a *benevolent despot*. The amazing thing about Chinese history and culture is that he could do something like that *because of a tradition stretching back to ⌘c.2200 BC*. In no other culture is that possible. (Note: from now on in the notes, anchor facts will be specially marked with an anchor symbol “⌘” to emphasize their special role in helping us to understand the story.)
6. The timeline of Chinese history, can now be mapped from start to finish.

