



# Fu Hao

**Read the information about Fu Hao and the discovery of her tomb, then answer the comprehension questions in as much detail as you can.**

## An Exciting Discovery

In 1976, a team of archaeologists led by Zheng Zhenxiang – the ‘First Lady of Chinese Archaeology’ - made a remarkable discovery at the site of the ancient Shang capital, Yinxu, in modern day Anyang: the tomb of the Shang military general and high priestess Fu Hao.

Fu Hao’s tomb is the only complete Shang tomb discovered to date. Therefore, the contents of the tomb are very important and they have provided important evidence not just about Fu Hao but also about the Shang people too.

## Lady Fu Hao

Fu Hao was one of King Wu Ding’s sixty wives who worked as a military general and high priestess. She was well respected by King Wu Ding and he asked her to lead ritual ceremonies, including offering sacrifices and reading oracle bones. This was very unusual for a woman at the time so it shows how important Fu Hao was.

In her role as a military general, Fu Hao led thirteen thousand soldiers into battle and she was in charge of other important generals such as Zhi and Hu Gao. Fu Hao and her soldiers fought battles against many different tribes and in one single battle, they defeated the Tu-Fang tribe, who had fought the Shang for many years. Fu Hao was the first known female military leader as well as the most successful military leader of her time.

Fu Hao had a son called Prince Jie and oracle bones have been found which express concern for Fu Hao’s safety during childbirth.

## The Tomb

Fu Hao’s tomb is dated to around 1200 BC. It was smaller than other royal tombs and it was outside the main royal cemetery. The tomb was a large pit with a wooden chamber inside and in the centre of the chamber was Fu Hao’s coffin. Above the ground, there was a building where memorial ceremonies and rituals were probably held.

## Contents

A huge number of items were found inside Fu Hao’s tomb. There were over four hundred and fifty bronze items; over seven hundred and fifty items made from jade; five hundred and fifty items made from bone; sixty-three stone items; eleven pottery items and five ivory items. There were also almost seven thousand cowrie shells.

Inside the tomb were also the skeletons of six dogs which were located in their own small pit below Fu Hao’s coffin. It is likely that these were Fu Hao’s pets who were sacrificed when she was buried. Around the edge of the tomb were the skeletons of sixteen humans who were probably Fu Hao’s advisers, also sacrificed so that they could continue to work for her in the afterlife.

## Historical Significance

The discovery and excavation of Fu Hao’s tomb has provided us with knowledge of not only Fu Hao herself but also how Shang society was organised, their traditions and customs and the importance of the artefacts inside. It is quite remarkable that we have been given such a clear view into this fascinating ancient civilisation and some of the extraordinary people who lived at the time.



# Fu Hao Questions

1. Where was Fu Hao's tomb?

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2. When was the tomb discovered and by whom?

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3. Why is the discovery of Fu Hao's tomb special?

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4. Who was Fu Hao?

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5. Which tribe did Fu Hao and her soldiers defeat?

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6. When is Fu Hao's tomb dated to?

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7. What was built above her tomb?

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8. What were the majority of items in Fu Hao's tomb made of?

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9. Why was Fu Hao buried with her dogs and advisers?

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10. What have we learnt from Fu Hao's tomb?

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**Challenge:** Can you write 2 of your own questions about Fu Hao or the discovery of her tomb?

Why not challenge a friend to answer them? (Make sure you know the answers yourself!)



# Fu Hao

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## **An Exciting Discovery**

In 1976, a team of archaeologists led by Zheng Zhenxiang – the ‘First Lady of Chinese Archaeology’ - made a remarkable discovery at the site of the ancient Shang capital, Yinxu, in modern day Anyang: the tomb of the Shang military general and high priestess Fu Hao.

Fu Hao’s tomb is the only Shang tomb discovered to date that has not been looted. Therefore, the contents of the tomb, along with inscriptions on oracle bones, are very important and they have provided important evidence not just about Fu Hao but also about the Shang people too.

## **Lady Fu Hao**

Fu Hao was one of King Wu Ding’s sixty wives who worked as a military general and high priestess. She was obviously well respected by King Wu Ding as he requested her to lead ritual ceremonies, including presenting sacrifices and oracle bone divining. This was very unusual for a woman at the time and demonstrated how powerful Fu Hao was.

In her role as a military general, Fu Hao was responsible for leading thirteen thousand soldiers into battle and she was in charge of other important generals such as Zhi and Hu Gao. Under Fu Hao’s leadership, the Shang fought battles against a number of different tribes and in one single battle they were finally able to defeat the Tu-Fang tribe, who had fought the Shang for many years. Fu Hao was not only the first known female military leader, but also the most successful and powerful military leader of her time, male or female.

Fu Hao had a son called Prince Jie and oracle bones have been found which express concern for Fu Hao’s safety during childbirth.

## **The Tomb**

Fu Hao’s tomb is dated to around 1200 BC. It was smaller than other royal tombs and it was outside the main royal cemetery. The tomb was a large pit with a wooden chamber inside and in the centre of the chamber was Fu Hao’s coffin. Evidence was found above ground of a building structure where memorial ceremonies and rituals were probably held.

## **Contents**

A huge number of items were discovered inside Fu Hao’s tomb, proving how important and powerful she was. There were over four hundred and fifty bronze items weighing a hefty one and a half metric tonnes, which included: one hundred and thirty weapons, twenty-seven knives, twenty-three bells, four tigers and four mirrors. In addition to this there were over seven hundred and fifty items made from jade; five hundred and fifty items made from bone, including many hair pins and arrow-heads; sixty-three stone items; eleven pottery items and five ivory items. There were also almost seven thousand cowrie shells which demonstrated her family’s wealth and importance.

Inside the tomb were also the skeletons of six dogs which were located in their own small pit below Fu Hao’s coffin. It is likely that these were Fu Hao’s pets who were sacrificed when she was buried. Around the edge of the tomb were the skeletons of sixteen humans who were probably Fu Hao’s advisers, also sacrificed so that they could continue to serve her in the afterlife.

## **Historical Significance**

The discovery and excavation of Fu Hao’s tomb has provided us with knowledge of not only Fu Hao herself but also how Shang society was organised, their traditions and customs and the importance of the artefacts inside. It is quite remarkable that we have been given such a clear view into this fascinating ancient civilisation and some of the extraordinary people who lived at the time.



# Fu Hao Questions

1. Where was Fu Hao's tomb located?

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2. When was the tomb discovered and by whom?

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3. The tomb has taught us a lot about Fu Hao and the Shang people. What other evidence has helped us learn about the Shang?

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4. What jobs did Fu Hao do?

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5. Who was Wu Ding?

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6. What battle was particularly significant for Fu Hao and the Shang people? Why?

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7. Why do you think memorial services were held for Fu Hao outside her tomb?

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8. What were the majority of items in Fu Hao's tomb made of?

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9. Who else was buried with Fu Hao? Why?

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10. Why is the discovery of Fu Hao's tomb of such historical significance?

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**Challenge:** Can you write 3 of your own questions about Fu Hao or the discovery of her tomb? Why not challenge a friend to answer them? (Make sure you know the answers yourself!)



# Fu Hao

**Read the information about Fu Hao and the discovery of her tomb, then answer the comprehension questions in as much detail as you can.**

## **An Exciting Discovery**

In 1976, a team of archaeologists led by Zheng Zhenxiang – the ‘First Lady of Chinese Archaeology’ - made a remarkable discovery at the site of the ancient Shang capital, Yinxu, in modern day Anyang: the tomb of the Shang military general and high priestess Fu Hao.

Fu Hao’s tomb is the only intact Shang tomb discovered to date. Many other tombs have also been found but all have been previously ransacked by looters meaning limited evidence remains. The contents of Fu Hao’s tomb along with inscriptions on oracle bones have allowed historians to learn a great deal about this special lady and her significance to the Shang people.

## **Lady Fu Hao**

Fu Hao was one of King Wu Ding’s sixty wives who worked as a military general and high priestess. She was obviously held in very high regard by King Wu Ding as records reveal that he requested her to lead ritual ceremonies, including the presentation of sacrifices and oracle bone divining. This was very unusual for a woman at the time and demonstrated how powerful Fu Hao was.

In her role as a military general, Fu Hao was responsible for leading thirteen thousand soldiers into battle and important generals such as Zhi and Hu Gao worked under her direction. Under Fu Hao’s command, the Shang fought campaigns against a number of different tribes and in one single battle they were finally able to defeat the Tu-Fang tribe, who had fought against the Shang for many years. This marked out Fu Hao as not only the first known female military leader, but also the most influential military leader of her time, male or female.

Fu Hao had a son called Prince Jie and oracle bones have been found which express concern for Fu Hao’s safety during childbirth.

## **The Tomb**

Fu Hao’s tomb is dated to around 1200 BC. It was smaller than other royal tombs and it was outside the main royal cemetery. It consisted of a large pit with a wooden chamber inside and in the centre of the chamber was Fu Hao’s lacquered coffin. Evidence was found above ground of a building structure where memorial ceremonies and rituals were probably held in honour of Fu Hao. Fu Hao’s tomb was opened to the public in 1999 and a memorial hall has been constructed above it to replicate the one which might have been built for Fu Hao on her death.

## **Contents**

A staggering number of items were discovered inside Fu Hao’s tomb, proving how influential, powerful and respected she was. There were over four hundred and fifty bronze items weighing a hefty one and a half metric tonnes, which included: one hundred and thirty weapons, twenty-seven knives, twenty-three bells, four tigers and four mirrors. In addition to this there were over seven hundred and fifty items made from jade; five hundred and fifty items made from bone, including many hair pins and arrow-heads; sixty-three stone items; eleven pottery items and five ivory items. There were also almost seven thousand cowrie shells which demonstrated her family’s wealth and importance.

Many of the jade items were from an earlier period in history indicating that Fu Hao was a collector of antiquities.

Inside the tomb were also the skeletons of six dogs which were located in their own small pit below Fu Hao’s coffin. It is likely that these were Fu Hao’s pets sacrificed at the time of her burial to accompany her into the afterlife. Around the perimeter of the tomb were the skeletons of sixteen humans who were probably Fu Hao’s advisers, also sacrificed so that they could continue to serve her after death just as they had done in life.

## **Historical Significance**

The discovery and excavation of Fu Hao’s tomb has provided us with a privileged knowledge of not only Fu Hao herself but also how Shang society was organised, their traditions and customs and the significance of the artefacts that were preserved inside. It is quite remarkable that we have been given such a clear view into this fascinating ancient civilisation and some of the extraordinary people who lived at the time.



# Fu Hao Questions

1. Where was Fu Hao's tomb located?

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2. When was the tomb discovered and by whom?

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3. Why was the discovery of Fu Hao's tomb particularly significant?

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4. How do we know that King Wu Ding trusted and respected Fu Hao?

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5. Why is Fu Hao regarded as the most influential military leader of her time?

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6. Describe what you think might have happened in a memorial service for Fu Hao outside her tomb.

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7. Why do you think Fu Hao was buried with so many bronze and jade items?

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8. Why do historians think that Fu Hao was a collector of antiques?

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9. Why is the discovery of Fu Hao's tomb of such historical significance?

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10. Can you think of any other ancient civilisations who also buried their dead in elaborate tombs?  
How are they similar and different from the Shang?

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**Challenge:** Can you write 3 of your own questions about Fu Hao or the discovery of her tomb?

Why not challenge a friend to answer them? (Make sure you know the answers yourself!)