

Formal schools were established during the Xia dynasty (2070 BC–1600 BC). The king at the time sought out able men (including Mencius, Hsun Tzu, Zou Yan and Lu Zhonglian) across his kingdom to lecture regularly on various topics, leading to 100 schools of thought contending with each other. After the unification of the Qin Empire (221–206 BC) in 221 BC, Qin Shi Huang (the first emperor of China, who reigned from 259–210 BC) forbade private schools of any form in his kingdom, so that he could exert strict control over the common people. They were called Xiao during the Xia, Xiang during the Shang dynasty (1600 BC–1046 BC) and Xu during the early Zhou dynasty (1046 BC–221 BC). Xu were divided into East Xu and West Xu. East of the capital of the Zhou kingdom stood the East Xu. These were the precursors of college, where the children of nobility were educated. Following the advice of Li Si, secretary of the Qin Empire (221 BC–206 BC), Qin Shi Huang ordered the promulgation of legalist education. During the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 BC) slave society was at its peak.