

# CHINESE CULTURE: GEORGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

CH'U CHAI

## I

Chinese history runs back as far as those of Egypt, Babylonia, and India,<sup>(1)</sup> but its continuity has been far less disturbed by foreign conquests.<sup>(2)</sup> As a result, not only has Chinese culture been isolated in its development,<sup>(3)</sup> but also different in character from those of Egypt, Babylonia, and India. The georgraphic background of Chinese culture will help to explain this difference.

Natural environment forms the background of all human existence and constantly conditions all human institutions. Human culture originated in the place where population aggregated in a considerable number and maintained permanent relations. Hence the area, irrigated by rivers and protected by natural barriers, was required by primitive men to support a large population and to bring about those relations among men. By looking at the map of the world, we shall find comparatively few places that fulfil these requirements. It is therefore no accident that all early known civilizations developed along the Nile valley in Egypt, the Mesopotamia valley in Babylonia, and the Ganges Valley in India. In the origin of civilization geography played an important part.<sup>(4)</sup> Until the time of Greece, civilization may be regarded as 'fluvial', centering along the banks of rivers and in fertile river valleys. Then European civilization became 'thalassic', focusing in the Mediterranean, and finally became 'oceanic', utilizing the great oceanic stretches of water as bonds of contact between East and West.<sup>(5)</sup>

Chinese culture has been traditionally and historically believed to originate in the Hwang Ho valley, but in fact Hwang Ho itself is not suitable for irrigation or communication. The origin of Chinese culture, to speak more specifically, did not depend upon Hwang Ho itself, but upon its tributaries. At the confluence of Hwang Ho and its tributaries, there are many different alluvial tracts of land, somewha like the Greek delta, for which the Chinese character is 'Jui' (洧), such as the Wei Jui (渭洧), the Ching Jui (涇洧), the Lo Jui (洛洧) and others.

As we shall see, important culture sites in ancient China have been located, for example, in the northwest areas which contain various alluvial tracts of land formed

by Hwang Ho and its tributaries: The Yü (虞) culture owed its origin to the southwest of Shansi (山西), on the northeast bank of Hwang Ho, into which the Fen River (汾河) flows. Next, the Hsia (夏) culture owed its origin to the northwest of Honan (河南), on the south bank of Hwang Ho, into which the Yi (伊) and the Lo (洛) Rivers flow. Then the Chou (周) culture owed its origin to the east of Shensi (陝西), on the west bank of Hwang Ho, into which the Wei (渭) River flows. A hasty survey of the origins of the three great cultures leads to the conclusion that Chinese culture has been cradled in the alluvial plains at the confluence of Hwang Ho and its tributaries, such as the Fen, the Yi, the Lo, and the Wei, in which agriculture flourishes.

Moreover, all these 'jui' or deltas formed a number of land units of various sizes and of various formations, separated from one another by natural barriers of broad rivers or high mountains, or joined by river systems or valleys. Some units are distinct, with natural boundaries on all sides, and other natural boundaries were indistinct or broken in places. In either case, the fords of Hwang Ho in such districts as Ho Tsin (河津), Lin Tsin (臨晉), and Ping Lu (平陸) in Shansi were the means of transportation and communication among these deltas. Chinese history records that the Hsia people came from the Lo River valley northwards across Hwang Ho, then by Mao Tsin (茅津) in the district of Ping Lu and further east by Meng Tsin (孟津) to meet the Yü people in the Fen River valley. As a consequence, the Yü and Hsia cultures were closely connected.<sup>(6)</sup> The Chou people seem to have come from the west in central Shensi, and, harassed by the nomadic tribes, made frequent moves. According to the *Book of Odes (Shih Ching)* they first lived in the district of Tai (邰), then moved to Pin (邠), then to Ch'i (岐), then to Feng Hao (豐鎬), and finally settled in the Wei River valley. Here they cleared the rich alluvial land and came into contact with the inhabitants of the Fen River valley on the east bank of Hwang Ho. The three great cultures were thus blended into one at a very early period, and helped to develop the consciousness of unity that encouraged the formation of a united state with great territorial expansion. This was the so-called western centre of Chinese culture, where the Yang Shao (仰韶) culture<sup>(7)</sup> originated and flourished.

In ancient days, Hwang Ho flowed through the eastern part of Honan as far as the district of Cheng (鄭), and thence it turned northwards under the Ta P'ei Mountain (大伾) and along the Tai Hang Range (太行) before entering the sea at the Po-hai Bay (渤海) near Tientsin. The ancient capital of Shang dynasty was in the district of An Yang (安陽) in Honan, where the Chang (漳) and the Huan (洹) Rivers flow into the Hwang Ho. This is to show that the Shang people came from the south bank of Hwang Ho and that they stayed there for about 300 years before they

crossed Hwang Ho and made An Yang their capital. During the past fifty years, tortoise shells, animal bones, pottery articles, stone implements, and bronze objects have been successively unearthed on the "Ruins of Yin" (殷墟), the original seat of the capital of the Shang-Yin dynasty. A great majority of these materials have proved to be the relics of the remote Shang-Yin dynasty. In the *Analects*, Confucius said: "I can describe the ceremonies of the Yin dynasty, but the relics and documents of the present state of Sung (宋) (supposed to have been descended from the extinct Yin) are not sufficient to substantiate my description." (III-9) This is to show that in the time of Confucius information about the Shang (Yin) people was already meagre. Thanks to the above-mentioned excavations, we, who are living 2500 years after Confucius, now possess means for the better understanding of the Shang-Yin dynasty.

The Shang people originally lived near Kuei Teh (歸德) in Honan, which is beyond Hwang Ho. In ancient times, there were in that region many marshes, such as the marshes of Meng Chu (孟渚) and Meng (蒙), and small rivers, such as the Sui (睢) and the Huo (濊) Rivers; further north in central Honan there were the marshes of Ying (滎), and Pu Tien (圃田); further northeast in southwestern Shantung there were the marshes of Ho (荷), Lei Hsia (雷夏), and Ta Yeh (大野). The early culture of the Shangs probably originated near these marshes, where they grew crops on the fertile soil and raised cattle and sheep on the rich grasslands. So far as we know, these marshes lay in ancient times between the Huai (淮) and the Chi (濟) Rivers; that is, the plains of what is now northern Honan, southern Hopei, and southwestern Shantung. The most remote of the Shang sites was not much over one hundred miles from Hwang Ho.

During the first three hundred years following the founding of the kingdom sometime in the 16th century B. C., the Shangs were forced by the floods of the Hwang Ho to move their capital. It was not until the 14th century B. C. when King Pan Keng (盤庚) moved the capital to An Yang in northern Honan where a permanent site was found. An Yang, which was then known as Yin (殷), remained the royal capital for about 270 years. This was the so-called eastern centre of Chinese culture, which evidently descended from the Lung Shan (龍山) culture<sup>(8)</sup>, originated and flourished in the alluvial plains of Eastern China.

These two cultures had existed through the early ages not in complete independence of each other; they, in fact, even in prehistorical days, had each been influenced by the other. It seems that the Shang people had dominated in the west as far as the Wei River valley; in other words, they had long been in contact with the Chou people. Eastwards their power extended to the sea coast of North China, including the low lands of the Chi River in Shantung; northeastwards, to the Liao

(遼) River in Hopei; southwards, to the Huai River in Anhwei; and southwestwards, to the Han (漢) River in Hupei. It is believed that the Shang culture even penetrated into the regions south of the Huai River and the Han River and north of the Yangtze River. Therefore, these regions, though outside the Hwang Ho valley, were already influenced by the Chinese culture as early as the Shang dynasty, of which we have knowledge both from classics and excavations and the documents they have brought to light. In the beginning of the Chou dynasty, the Yangtze River valley and the lands near the Han, the Huai, the Chi and the Liao Rivers all had become integral parts of the Chinese cultural entity.

From this short sketch of the physical environment, we may note the major reason for the divergencies of Chinese culture from those of Egypt, Babylonia, and India. All early known civilizations—Egypt, Babylonia, India, and China, as mentioned above, developed in river valleys. This was no historical accident. Rivers are the arteries of a country. All large countries have large rivers. There are, for instance, the Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and the Euphrates in Babylonia, and the Indus and the Ganges in India. In the case of Egypt and Babylonia, the rivers have only a few tributaries over a small area.<sup>(9)</sup> The case of India is slightly different. In the alluvial plain watered by the Indus and four of its tributaries, India developed its first real civilization; after the Indo-Aryan people invaded India, they spread eastward until the Epic Age (1000–500 B. C.) when they were creating kingdoms along the Ganges valley. Like Egypt, Babylonia, and India, China first developed a fluvial civilization. However, in China, the major rivers have many tributaries which act as waterways over a vast area. The three large rivers drain the three natural divisions of China—the Yellow River in North China, the Yangtze River in Central China, and the Pearl River in South China. Besides, there are many small rivers and streams, such as the Shu (涑) stream near the Fen River, the Ch'i (淇) and the P'u (濮) streams near the Chang River, the Yi (伊) Stream near the Lo River, the Feng (澧) and the Hao (滹) Streams near the Wei Rivers. All these rivers and streams were famous in ancient Chinese history. It is an important fact that the agrarian culture of ancient China owed its origin to a vast area intersected by many rivers with numerous deltas for human habitation. These deltas were scattered far and wide; they were protected by natural barriers and were able to sustain large populations. Hence these places were highly suitable for the growth of culture, and when development of independent cultures reached a certain stage, they came into contact with each other, because of the presence of so many important rivers, and finally became amalgamated. It is therefore not surprising to learn that China has long been more homogeneous politically, culturally, and racially than many other areas of comparable size. This explains that the cultural difference between China

and the three other ancient countries is computable to the geographical features.

Then climate is another important factor in cultural development. None of the greatest types of civilization appears to have originated within 25° of the equator.<sup>(10)</sup> Egypt, Babylonia, and the Indus region, which are often cited as places where civilization developed in hot climates, are no exceptions to this rule. In fact, the parts where civilization first flowered lie in latitudes 25° to 35°, where the bounty of nature furnishes food in abundance and gives leisure for social development. China, in contrast, is located on the eastern side of the Eurasian continent, and Chinese culture originated in a region which has a continental climate—very hot in summer and considerably cold in winter. From the *Book of Odes*, we learn that the climate, agricultural products, and the life of peasants described in the Chou period bore much resemblance to those of the present day. So the Chinese people began to build their culture under more difficult circumstances and consequently had to work hard than their rich neighbors in Egypt, Babylonia, and India, in order to prepare shelter, clothing, and fuel as means of combatting the cold and moisture of winter.

The preceding discussion of physical differences makes clear three points, and we need only to mention them briefly. First, most ancient cultures emerged in small deltas, which were fit to be the homes of small, distinct units, and hence attempts to maintain united nations of great size in these places have failed. Chinese culture alone arose in a vast area which encouraged the formation of one united nation with great territorial expansion. Second, cultures springing from small areas were compelled to wage defensive wars against outside invaders, and in the end were either cut short or gradually declined. Chinese culture alone arising in a vast area soon achieved internal unity which has enabled it to tame the great wilderness and resist dangers from without, and hence suffered few invasions and interruption to its continuity. Third, cultures originating in warm climate and fertile soil tended to stagnation and resulted in decadence. Chinese culture alone, as it began in a comparatively cool climate and vast area, has maintained itself by promoting a social system which has placed value on foresight and thrift. China, therefore, has good reasons to be proud of her culture, which emerged from the ancient world and unified a vast nation during the Ch'in (255–206 B. C.) and Han (206 B. C.—A. D. 220) dynasties, extending from the Hwang Ho basin down to the Yangtze valley, at a time when the ancient cultures of Egypt, Babylonia, and India had already ceased to dazzle the eyes of the world and been swamped by other cultures.

## II

If we now look round the world and ask in what countries human cultures have attained a high degree of achievements, we shall no doubt find such achievements

in ancient China and modern West. There were great cultures in Egypt, Babylonia, and India. They had produced a considerable stock of arts and of the rudiments of science, but as their intellectual vigour had long waned, they had left their places to other races. So even today, Chinese culture and Western culture are the two pillars of wisdom in human civilization. These two great cultures, however widely separated, are not indifferent to each other. This is a century that East and West join in hands, to study the ways and means for East-Western cultural collaboration. Now let us proceed to a comparison between these two great cultures, in order to exhibit the general features of Chinese culture.

Western culture owes its origin to Greece, where we can find all the characteristic features of Europe. The mountains and the sea break up this area into numerous valleys and islands, easily defended, and yet, because of the sea, not isolated. Special attention deserves to be paid to this geographic background which not only determined the basic character of Greek culture, but also played a considerable role in shaping its development.

Greek culture flourished during the period of Chou dynasty in China. This period in China, as in Greece, was an age of great mental activity, in which all kinds of original ideas spread unchecked. The Chou period produced such great classics as the *Shu* (書), *Shih* (詩), *Yi* (易), *Li* (禮), and *Ch'un Ch'iu*, (春秋)<sup>(11)</sup> which have molded Chinese thought right up the 20th century. China's great philosophers, such as Lao Tzu, Confucius, Mo Tzu, Mencius, Chuang Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu, all belonged to this time. And again, the Chou period, as that of Greece, was an age of intense political activity. The vast domain of China was then divided into a number of feudal states, which were later engaged in frequent civil wars, but the Chinese people were of one blood, were possessed of a common civilization, and were united by a common language.

In Greece, similar conditions prevailed. However, there is an important difference. Greek geographical conditions broke the country into semi-independent city-states and the Greek political system bred inter-city jealousies and frequent civil wars. Therefore, the Greek city-states, though sharing a common culture, were never united as one political entity; they remained as independent city-states, each of which was a separate unit. This lack of unity was the weakness of the Greek political system, and this weakness was one day to prove fatal. The Chinese feudal states, in contrast, were only the fragments of an empire, the Royal House of the Chous. Confucius seemed to allude to this in a beautiful passage in which he compared the Royal House of Chou—the central government—to the polar star, which sits unmoved on its central throne, while all the constellations—the vassal states—revolve around it. The feudalism, as existed in the Chou period, was in fact a step towards the cen-

tralization of national strength. When the Chous took over China's overlordship, they took a political measure of transplanting their people to different parts of China as armed settlers. So China during the Chou period was virtually a united nation. This was what was lacking in Greek politics. It was political conditions that accounted in the main for the cultural difference between China and Greece.

Then the unity of Greece was brought about by the conquest of Rome during the time when China became a united nation under the emperors of Ch'in and Han dynasties. During the four hundred years of the Han dynasty, as we shall see, many of the features that distinguish modern Chinese civilization were firmly established. In the same measure that Western civilization springs from Greece and Rome, oriental civilization owes its inspiration in the first place to China during the Han period. Here we shall trace the difference between Roman culture and Chinese culture of the Han period.

Rome, starting as a city state, extended her power by alliance and conquest over surrounding cities. It was conquest and expansion that led to the emergence of a new form of state—a great empire, vast in area, centralized in organization, and uniform in law. The Roman world-state gave the Westerners a conception of one universal culture based on peace and order which they had never had before. So when Rome succeeded Greece, not only was the political structure changed from city states to an empire, but Greek culture was replaced by Roman culture as well. Up to the period of Han dynasty, the Chinese people had been in possession of China for more than two thousand years. Chinese culture still persisted and her ancient tradition had not changed; there was only a change in internal political structure—that is, from feudalism to a provincial system. Here we notice the difference: In Western history, when Rome took on importance politically and culturally, she appeared as entirely new entity and incorporated Greek culture in her own, while in China the rise and fall of dynasties were only changes in political structure, and Chinese culture still remained in its entity.

And again, we proceed to compare the Middle Ages in Europe after the fall of Roman Empire with the period of the Six Dynasties (A. D. 220–580), which succeeded the Han dynasty in China. In the midst of cruel invasions and bloody battles, new religions—Buddhism and Christianity—gave men a feeling of hope and spiritual assurance which helped compensate and offset the uncertainly and insecurity now plainly apparent in the world about them. In Europe and in China, during these centuries of destruction, monasteries became cultural depositories where artistic and literary traditions were preserved and continued. However, there is a marked difference. The fall of Roman Empire, like the decline of Greek culture, was brought about by a foreign invasion, that of Teutonic barbarians in the north. The northern

invasion was at first marked by considerable destruction. Not only did the political structure of Europe undergo a total change, but also Roman civilization and tradition seemed completely lost. The fall of Han dynasty was not caused by foreign invasions; there was only a slight change in political structure, but Chinese culture still persisted. Even when Tartar tribes invaded north China in the fourth century, Chinese traditions and institutions still predominated. As these northern barbarians lived within the boundaries of the Chinese nation and under the influence of Chinese culture, they had already been assimilated into the Chinese race. For this reason, their revolts might be regarded as a political coup d'etate rather than a foreign invasion. In Europe, therefore, the Teutonic tribes in the Middle Ages came as a new people and absorbed the ancient Romans, whereas in China, during the period of Six Dynasties, the Chinese people still dominated to be the foundation of society and the Tartar newcomers only played the role of minorities.

Moreover, toward the close of the Middle Ages, the Teutonic barbarians had destroyed the foundation of the social order and released new and terrifying forces. The result of this process was modern civilization and modern states; during the process such social and political life as existed was of the peculiar, transitional form known as feudalism. The European feudalism which was caused by the fall of Roman Empire differed from the Chinese feudalism during the Chou period. Feudalism in ancient China was a necessary step in the progress of Chinese culture towards a united nation, while European feudalism was a transitional political system which brought a measure of order to the chaos that engulfed Europe after the collapse of Roman Empire. For the progressive force at that time in Europe making for unity was not feudalism, but Christianity. The only institution that retained its unity during the Middle Ages was the Church. Growing up on the ruins of the Roman Empire, the Church adopted an imperial organization, which was far more united and efficient than any possessed by its competitors, and its power was further strengthened by superstitious reverence in which it was held by the Teutonic barbarians. Hence Greece, Rome, and Christianity were the three forces which made up the fabric of Western civilization. During the period of Six Dynasties, Buddhism, as introduced from India, offered new notions and new ideals, with which the old Chinese culture had to contend. However, Buddhism permeated Chinese culture not so deeply and thoroughly as Christianity did in Europe. The reason is that Christianity came to Europe as a new force after the decay of Roman culture, while Buddhism came to China as a foreign creed which was finally absorbed by Confucian philosophy and lost its original character.

From this short survey, we may derive three conclusions and need only mention them briefly: First, in Europe, the Teutonic tribes replaced the old Romans, while



in China, the northern Tartars became Chinese in all but physiognomy. Second, in Europe, feudalism replaced the Roman Empire as a new pattern of society, while in China the old political institution still persisted without any fundamental change. Third, in Europe, Christianity replaced the Roman culture as a powerful and positive force stimulating an outburst of new culture, while in China, the Confucian tradition predominated and was only slightly modified by Buddhism. In short, the Middle Ages in Europe completely broke away from the old traditions, while the period of Six Dynasties in China perpetuated the old traditions.

By the end of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance marked the emergence of modern civilization and modern states, which appeared entirely new entities, independent of the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. So in Western history, the center of culture shifts from one place to another place.<sup>(12)</sup> But in Chinese history, the foreign invasions did not create a marked break or change in the continuity and unity of Chinese culture and civilization.<sup>(13)</sup> So Chinese culture expands from the center rather than progresses. This historical experience serves to prove two important facts: First, Chinese culture was created by the Chinese people, and always remains dominant and manifest, neither engulfed nor dispersed by the incessant advent of the alien people; second, Chinese culture has continued along its path for four or five thousand years with occasional expansion, but without fundamental changes. These historical facts explain why the Chinese people are remarkably homogeneous in their physique and tenacious in their mentality.

### III

In forming an estimate of Chinese culture, we first note the cultural difference between China and the West. The reasons for this cultural difference are not difficult to discern. First, physical environment in the main accounts for the difference in the trend of Chinese and Western cultures. China lies in the center of Eastern Asia, occupying a vast area which naturally encourages the formation of a united nation with great territorial expansion. It is no wonder that China became a vast and united nation at the very early period. Hence to the Chinese, internal problems are more important than the external ones, and their attitude is comparatively "introvert"—looking inwards upon themselves. On the contrary, Europe as a whole is adapted to a number of small states; all attempts to maintain a continental empire in Europe have failed. The continent of Europe even today is still merely a geographical expression, whereas in China, there is one language, one culture, and one nation. Hence to the Westerners, external problems are more important than the internal ones, and their attitude is comparatively "extrovert"—looking outwards upon the external world. It is because the Westerners are "extrovert" that they

emphasize the expansion of power in space and create the spirit of progress. As a result, geographical discoveries and scientific inventions have thoroughly energized the culture of the West and carried it to the ends of the earth. It is because the Chinese are "introvert" that they emphasize the continuation of life in time and cling to the heritage of their traditions. As a result, Chinese culture is unique in its continuity, and its remarkable characteristic is a capacity for change without disruption. In its development, Chinese culture has absorbed many a heterogeneous elements through an assimilating power that testifies to the marvelous vitality of Chinese civilization. In its development, Chinese culture has also undergone some modifications in consequence of alien influences, but such modifications have not affected its main parts which remain fundamentally and characteristically Chinese.

Next, the cultural difference between China and the West is due to economic conditions. Since China is a continental country, the Chinese people have to make their living by agriculture. Even today the portion of the Chinese population engaged in farming is estimated at 75 to 80 per cent. Hence Chinese culture since the early days has been based on agriculture. Western culture, since the days of Greece and Rome, has been based on commerce. From the Western viewpoint, cultural progress proceeds from agrarian civilization to commercial civilization, whereas from the Chinese viewpoint, human civilization will never cease to be agrarian in character. It is conceivable that Westerners regard civilization as changing and progressive, while the Chinese consider civilization as static and growing. One reason for the different views is that the Chinese *were* farmers and the way of life of the farmers is to follow nature, so they desire no change; whereas the Westners *were* merchants and the way of the life of merchants is to look for novelty, so they are accustomed to change. It is therefore not surprising that China failed to have scientific and industrial revolutions, which have tremendously transformed and modernized European nations. Moreover, in China, there were many noteworthy inventions in industry, but the Chinese failed to profit by their inventions, and often discouraged mechanical production.

In this connection, it is interesting to note the distinction Confucius made between the wise and the good. He said:

"The wise take delight in water; the good take delight in mountain.

The wise move; the good stay still.

The wise find enjoyment; the good enjoy a full span of life."<sup>(14)</sup>

In this passage, there is something which suggests the difference between the Western way and the Chinese way—the way of the wise and the way of the good.

And again, we may point out that life ideal is another reason for the difference between Chinese culture and Western culture. The Westerners are impressed by

the antagonism of the different factors in the world: the antagonism of human versus divine, of ideal versus real, of society versus individual, of authority versus liberty, and so forth. The Chinese, in contrast, are impressed, not by the antagonism, but by the continuity of the world. To the mind of the Chinese, society and individual, for instance, are not antagonistic to each other; they are simply a continuous whole. "Liberty," as we know, is an all-important word in the West, for it is the essence of Western civilization. Another significant word in the Western civilization is "organization," for it was most needed for the formation of the modern state. Where Greek civilization, demanding reason and personal freedom, represents "liberty", Roman Empire and Christianity, emphasizing authority and discipline, represents "organization." These two words represent the two main trends in Western civilization, and from these two words, we may see and appreciate the significance of Western civilization. Because of the antagonism of society versus individual, Westerners demand liberty as well as organization. The Chinese, however, are not interested in these two concepts. Because they look inward, the Chinese regard society and individual as one whole. Although the whole is formed of many minor selves, yet the minor selves are not antagonistic to the whole; on the contrary, they form a part of the whole, just as the growing and expanding roots merge into the whole. In the *Ta Hsueh* or the Great Learning,<sup>(15)</sup> for example, we are informed that by cultivating oneself, one can regulate the family; by regulating the family, one can govern the state; by governing the state, one can pacify the world. The converging series is growing by stages, expanding by stages, and accomplishing by stages. However widely the branches may extend, the quality of their fruit is determined by the common root. Thus the self is not antagonistic to the family, to the state, or to the world, for the self merges into the whole. This is the Chinese philosophy of life. If we look at the Chinese culture with the idea of liberty and organization based on the Greek, Roman, and Christian civilization, we shall not be able to see the real meaning and value of Chinese culture. We should then first understand the philosophy of the Chinese people, before we study the Chinese culture, for only then can we see its unique significance and value.

We still have to illustrate this cultural difference by referring to the religious beliefs. According to the Westerners, the universe is composed of pairs of opposites and contradictories; hence they draw a clear distinction between heaven and earth on the ground that heaven is a spiritual world separated from the earth by a vast distance of space. They further believe that man consists of soul and body, the soul making contact with the spiritual world of reason and the body making contact with the material world of senses. Consequently, by making a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the material, they opened the door to complete skepticism

as regards the universe. As a result, science and philosophy are interactive from the Western standpoint, and it is not surprising that some of the great philosophers were at the same time men of science.

The Chinese, however, for centuries have been able to conceive what happens in the universe is a continuous whole like a chain of natural sequence. This is the conception that confirms and perpetuates the fusion and intermixture of heaven and earth, between which, as they affect the daily life and conduct of the people, the distinction is in practice hard to draw, and harder to maintain. It has been generally accepted that the mind of the Chinese is filled with romance and poetry, so that to them the invisible world is peopled with fairies and all kinds of gods; but the invisible world in the mind of the Chinese is not a kingdom in heaven but a paradise on earth. This earthly paradise can be reached by the following steps: first, by establishing virtuous influence; second, by writing literary masterpieces; and third, by doing great deeds. Evidently, the Chinese only want to leave this world their virtues, their writings, and their deeds; they were seldom preoccupied with a heavenly kingdom outside the human world. In the West the desire for immortality crystallizes into religion, whereas in China it becomes ethics. As a result, religion and ethics are interactive from the Chinese standpoint, and it is no wonder that Chinese philosophy has from the outset emphasized the moral qualities of man, rather than his intellectual and material qualities. The sense of duty is stronger in China than the love of liberty. In the West duty and privilege are opposites, whereas in China they are merged together forming the identification of Nature (liberty) with destiny (duty) as well as the union of Heaven with Man.<sup>(16)</sup> The Chinese conceive the universe as a harmonious whole in which "all things are in harmony and in accordance."

Without further comment, we venture to conclude that in China we discern a unity of thought not parallel in the western world. Modern science gives us freedom to study the specific, but deprives us of the unity to see human life in its entity. It is this spirit of unity which combines art, religion, philosophy, and literature within the House of Chinese Culture. The unity of this spirit is in fact what we call the fundamental spirit of Chinese culture,<sup>(17)</sup> and the most characteristic features of Chinese culture may be illustrated, as different in type, origin, and constitution, from other great cultures, by reference to this fundamental spirit. It is here then that we must look for the study of Chinese culture.

#### NOTES

- (1) Archaeologists have spent much time in arguing about which of these countries really can claim the honor of originating civilization, and the argument, however, has not been definitely settled.

- (2) During the 631 years from 1280 to 1911, China was under alien rulers for 355 years. The alien rulers were first the Mongols, and later the Tungus Manchus. When the Mongols and Manchus conquered China they had already to a considerable extent adopted the culture of the Chinese. Thus though they dominated the Chinese politically, the Chinese dominated them culturally. Therefore they did not create a marked break or change in the continuity and unity of Chinese culture and civilization. See Ch'u Chai's "Chinese Humanism: A Study of Chinese Mentality and Temperament", *Social Research*, Volume 26, Number One, Spring, 1959.
- (3) Whether there was any contact or 'cross-fertilization' of culture between China and West in prehistorical days, we are not yet in a position to state decisively. Much earth still has to be moved by the archaeologists spade, but at the present there is a rather general agreement that the development of Chinese culture was on the whole of a more isolated character than that of Egypt, Babylonia, or India. However, this does not mean that the Chinese have been content to hand down from the earliest times a small stock of crystallized ideas or institutions without increase or modification. For an account of the origins of Chinese civilization, see Li Chi, *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1957.
- (4) This is not the view of Toynbee; he pointed out that while fluvial civilizations developed along the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates, none emerged in the physically comparable valleys of the Jordan and the Rio Grande. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization On Trial*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 11.
- (5) The early cultures of India were also mainly fluvial; large numbers of inhabitants congregated along the river banks.
- (6) While we can say scarcely anything about the Hsia dynasty, the fact that the ancient Chinese were persistently mentioned in ancient records as the Hsia people leads us to infer that the Hsia people were the leading exponents of Chinese culture in the early days.
- (7) The Yang Shao culture takes its name from a prehistorical settlement in the west of Honan. In 1921 J. G. Anderson discovered Neolithic remains at the village site of Yang Shao Ts'un in western Honan, and in the course of the next year or so located dozen of others over a huge area extending from Kansu to south Manchuria. Typical of this culture is its wonderfully hand-made pottery; it is of hard baked red or brown color with black, purple, white and red designs. Hence it was also known as the Painted Pottery culture.
- (8) The Lung Shan Culture, also known the Balck Pottery Culture, was discovered at a place called Ch'eng Tzu-yai (城子崖) in the district of Lung Shan in Shan-

- tung by the Chinese archaeologist Wu Gin-ding (吳金鼎) in 1928. This culture is distinguished by a black pottery of exceptionally fine quality and has been regarded as one of direct predecessors of the later Chinese civilization.
- (9) The culture of old Babylonia had its origin in a rich plain which extended about 170 miles north of the Persian Gulf between the Tigris-Euphrates rivers.
- (10) See Ellsworth Huntington, *Mainsprings of Civilization*, New York, The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1959, ch. 15.
- (11) The *Shu*, *Shih*, and *Yi* are the three classics that existed before the time of Confucius and remain today. During the Chou period, there were many books on *Li* (ceremonies), which had been lost. The *Yi Li* (儀禮), the *Chou Li* (周禮), and the *Li Chi* (禮記) were written after the time of Confucius. *Ch'un Ch'iu* (春秋) was the only book written by Confucius. These were known as the Five Classics, the *Li Chi* being the authorized Book of Ceremony.
- (12) Western civilization may be divided into three great epochs: (1) the fluvial, centered along the banks of rivers and in fertile river valleys, such as the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates; (2) the thalassic, focused in great inland seas such as the Mediteranean; (3) the oceanic, utilizing the great oceanic stretches of water as "bonds of contact making the world one unit." See Wallbank & Taylor, *Civilization, Past and Present*, Chicago, Scott, Foresman & Co., Vol. I, p. 49.
- (13) See note 2.
- (14) *Analects*, Bk. VI, Ch. 21.
- (15) The *Ta Hsueh* (大學), originally a chapter of the *Li Chi*, was attributed to Tseng Tzu. Its opening section reads: "The teaching of the *Great Learning* is to manifest one's illustrious virtue, love the people, and rest in the highest good... The ancients who wished to manifest illustrious virtue throughout the world, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulate their own families. Wishing to regulate their own families, they first cultivate their own selves..."
- (16) In Chinese philosophy ethics takes place of the theory of knowledge; it is ethics 'whose knowledge is wisdom, whose practice is virtue, and whose result is happiness.' It was only the Taoist philosophers who had attempted to shake off the humanistic garments of Confucianism and were gripped by insatiable curiosity about the facts and laws of nature. The speculation of the Taoists might have led to the development of physical sciences, had the Chinese mind not been so exclusively interested in human affairs that characterised Chinese thought. Instead, Taoist speculation turned to 'artistic' comprehension rather than 'scientific' understanding of nature.
- (17) In Ch'u Chai's *The Spirit of Chinese Culture*, it is pointed out that the funda-

---

mental spirit of Chinese culture "may be looked at from two points of view: that of cosmic conception and that of attitude toward life. In the former the spirit of Chinese culture is manifested as a continuous whole, like a chain of natural sequences. In the latter the spirit of Chinese culture is manifested in the union of the individual with the whole." See *Social Research*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Spring, 1957.

# 中國文化的釋義

翟 楚

中國文化導源於黃河及其支流所形成的三角地區“汭”，例如汾汭伊汭渭汭等，為虞夏周三代文化的發源地區，此即中國西部文化的發源地區，亦即所謂彩陶與華夏文化的原始根據地。但是商殷的文化則導源於河南中原的河濱地區，而後逐漸東向，達及山東河北，此為中國東部文化的發源地區，亦即所謂黑陶與商殷文化的原始根據地。此兩種文化雖有東西地區的差別，而實乃一貫相仍，息息相關，完成於中原文化的統一。

再就歷史言之，中國文化的形成，可謂一元化，所以其經歷的文化衝突，不甚顯著。夏殷周三代所構成的中原民族對於夷狄的文化，雖時有所吸取，但是皆無損於中國文化的本質。中國文化精神，重於內向的發展，時間的持續，所以中國文化能久而擴展，融貫於一統；因之，超越外向的精神不顯，抽象的分析觀念不著，而個人的自由意志不強。此為中國文化精神之一種解釋。