

## T' IEN-HSIA: ALL UNDER (THE CHINESE) HEAVEN

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That culture is deeply influenced by the physical environment is almost a truism, and perhaps nowhere more commonly accepted than in the case of Chinese culture. Those pioneer social scientists and generalizers about determinants of culture, the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century, draw heavily upon Chinese models, idealized at two removes, once by Chinese theorists and then again by Jesuit *rapporteurs*. Their ideal 'China' was a vast agrarian society where men and nature lived in harmony under the benign influence of a benevolent yet autocratic monarchy.<sup>1</sup>

What was left vague and undeveloped in 18th and 19th century theorising on the subject was the mechanism of geographic or environmental determinism. And the danger was that of explaining too much — or too little i.e. the alleged explanation is in terms which preclude an understanding of cultural differences.

Some might object that Marxism provides just such an insight into the mechanism of cultural determinism. I do not wish to pursue this controversial subject here. Let it suffice to quote an (admittedly revisionist) exponent of the marxist interpretation of early Chinese culture, Karl Wittfogel:

Ecological determinism oversimplifies the relation between the natural environment and man's technical and economic activities by claiming that this relation is one-sided (with man passively responding to the natural setting) and necessary. In fact, it involves a two-way process; and the ecological setting more often provides the possibility or probability, rather than the necessity for certain types of action.<sup>2</sup>

There are, in other words, some dimensions of culture which are clearly only partially determined by a specific environment. One of these is technology<sup>3</sup> with its cumulative and self-generating processes; another is religion.

Shortly, I shall clarify the sense in which I use that elusive concept 'religion' in this paper. For the moment, let us take 'religion' as world-views of the highest level of generality, that is, to use Peter Berger's language, a kind of world-construction, a 'cosmicization in a sacred mode'.<sup>4</sup>

From the earliest stages of the comparative study of religions, certain relationships between religion and the physical and social environment have been postulated. One, which should have relevance to ancient Chinese society, is the alleged relationship of fertility cults, especially in the 'mother goddess' form, and primitive agrarian societies.<sup>5</sup> Recently, the 'mother goddess' theory, especially in its New Eastern/European form, has been seriously called into question.<sup>6</sup> I would extend this critique which is primarily an attack on the diffusionist aspects of the theory, in two directions.

Firstly, there are at least some cases of 'mother goddess' cults of the classical type, found amongst hunter-gatherer peoples, and therefore related neither to agriculture, nor matriarchal societies. The Kunapipi cult of Arnhem Land is an excellent case in point.<sup>7</sup> Its prime focus seems to be human sexuality, not fertility in general, even in the sense in which reproduction of human, animal or plant life figures in Australian aboriginal 'increase' rites. Its function is orgiastic, and unlike those Australian rituals which Durkheim made the centre-piece of his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, it is not a unifying communal activity, but the preserve of cult-initiates. Its anomalous features may be due to its introduction from S.E. Asia,<sup>8</sup> but this does not suffice to explain either its extraordinary popularity, nor its rapid diffusion through Northern and Central Australia. Psychoanalytic theory may help us to unravel many features of the symbolism and the structure of the ritual.<sup>9</sup> But, at the very least, it serves as a reminder that crude environmental determinism is not a sufficient basis for general theories of religion.

A second outstanding exception to the mother-goddess/fertility cult syndrome is China. In Ancient China i.e. in the Shang and early Chou periods, from the mid second to mid first millenium B.C., there is clear evidence of pervasive fertility cults. The 'Central Plain' (*Chung-Yuan*) or 'central kingdom' (*Chung-kuo*) which was the nuclear area of Chinese civilization, was a rich agricultural riverine area, in many respects analogous to the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean homelands of the *Magna Mater*. Yet the cults were markedly dissimilar. In so far as we can disentangle the allusive references in later literature<sup>10</sup> it centred on local gods of the soil, male not female deities, some of whom such as Hou Chi, the Lord of Millet, became associated with the ancestor cults of the nobility. I do not believe that it is possible — and not purely because of the fragmentary state of evidence — successfully to correlate specific features of the ancient Chinese environment with all specific features of ancient Chinese religion.

None of what I have said is intended to deny the importance of environmental factors in the conditioning of religious developments in

'primitive' and archaic societies. But I would stress that it is a conditioning, a setting of limits, of possibilities and probabilities as Wittfogel says. In the end it is a matter of individual and communal experience which is mediated by the symbols of a culture. Culture itself, from one point of view (that of Clifford Geertz)

. . . denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.<sup>11</sup>

Symbols, in their crudest understanding, owe their origin to concrete experience, including that of the physical environment, and their force to the continuing resonance of that experience.

From such a point of view, religion is seen to be the highest level of cultural synthesis, and may be defined as:

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such a aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.<sup>12</sup>

This is not the place to embark on a full critique of Geertz's paradigm. It is both fruitful and fraught with difficulties. I am not convinced that all 'conceptions of a general order of existence' may or should be regarded as religious. What we have is a provocative piece of what Geertz calls 'thick description', rather than an essential definition. Nor have I thought through the methodological implications. Can an approach to anthropological field work and its analysis be applied successfully to the historian of religions' text-centred work? Geertz appears to argue in the closing remarks of his *Interpretation of Cultures*<sup>13</sup> that it can, but there are formidable linguistic and psychological as well as historical obstacles to overcome. However, I accept fully his basic contention that it is on higher-level cultural symbolization that we must concentrate in any attempt to elucidate the environmental boundaries of the Chinese sacred cosmos.

It is from the most fundamental polar terms of this symbolization process in China, heaven and earth, that this paper draws its title. To what extent is the Chinese conception of heaven, *t'ien*, the term employed in Chou Times and later to sum up the transcendent powers which ultimately govern human behaviour and all reality, conditioned by *t'ien-hsia*, the world, the physical environment? Ch'iu Chun, a 15th century thinker, once said: 'As heaven and earth begat them, men have

one and the same heaven but each a different earth'.<sup>14</sup> I would suggest, on the contrary, that these different earths, different physical environments, generate characteristic world-conceptions, which in turn produce different heavens, or religious symbol-systems.

## THE CHINESE ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

Before examining some key elements of the Chinese symbol-system, I would like to make a few remarks about some common misunderstandings of the Chinese attitude towards the natural world. These are of two chief varieties: an older, but by no means dead, confusion of Chinese attitudes with Western romanticism; and a more recent idealization by conservationists and environmentalists.

I shall not dwell on the first because it has been admirably treated by John Frodsham<sup>15</sup> amongst others. The Taoist view of nature which is the inspiring vision of much Chinese art and literature, is neither sentimental nor purely aesthetic.<sup>15a</sup> The Chinese appreciation of landscape, as charted by Frodsham, proceeded from the magic-charged *Ch'u Tzu* of the 3rd century B.C., through the Han dynasty *fu* with their elaborate descriptions of natural phenomenon, to the contemplative and quasi-mystical T'ang masters. Always it was a reflection of the deepest philosophical and religious insights of the age with no trace of the Western hostility of the artist and thinker which has been part of our cultural apparatus since Plato.

When we turn to the environmentalist movement's picture of Chinese attitudes towards nature we find many misconceptions. Even leaving aside the fringe of the 'consciousness' movement — I-Chingists, Taoist macrobiotics etc. — the more serious and scholarly literature abounds in what I regard as misinterpretations. For example, Jeremy Evans, in an otherwise admirable essay on 'Tao and the Ecosystem'<sup>16</sup> seems to me both to misinterpret some Taoist and Confucian texts, and to overgeneralize from them. He cites a famous passage<sup>17</sup> from the early Confucian philosopher, Mencius, on Ox Mountain, which, because of its proximity to the capital became denuded. But Mencius' point is not a conservationist one. Rather it is the usual Confucian humanist stress on man, with nature a sounding board and source of moral analogies. Mencius moves immediately from the rhetorical 'Can this be the nature of a mountain?' to 'Can what is in man be completely lacking in moral inclinations?'<sup>18</sup> Again, the Taoist *wu-wei* or 'not acting (contrary to nature)' refers primarily to human social activity, and has ruthless even totalitarian overtones ignored by Evans.

My main criticism, however, which applies not only to Evans but to most other writers on the subject, is their concentration on the attitudes

of the Chinese elite, and then only some of them. The Taoist philosophers and poets who found consolation and refuge in nature were still very much men of the city and, more, of the capital. I do not find any note of regret at the cost to nature in Po Chu-i's poem:

When the Six Kingdoms came to an end  
 When the Four Seas were unified  
 When the mountains of Ssu-ch'uan were denuded  
 Then the A-p'ang palace appeared.<sup>19</sup>

And even if Po did not build the famous causeway over the West Lake at Hangchow that bears his name, there is nothing incongruous to the Chinese in the fact that both causeways should be named after famous poets.<sup>19a</sup>

As for the Chinese peasant, his attitude towards his environment was fundamentally exploitative. Of course this was tempered by harsh experience. He knew only too well the limits to the resources of his land and his village's surroundings. He could not travel in search of aesthetic stimulus nor create delightful microcosms in the form of artificial gardens. His ideal was not landscape but manscape, a totally controlled and exploited environment. The recent exhibition of Chinese Peasant Paintings from Hu *hsien* in Shensi Province, makes this point very forcibly. There is a strong if naive delight in water-pumps, high-tension power lines, irrigation ditches and highways, as well as the colour and fruitfulness of the fields. And when the Chinese leadership urges all Chinese to 'learn from Tachai', the model commune, they are advocating the terracing of mountain sides, the piping and channelling of streams and the mechanization of agriculture.

Nor is this a Marxist or even a modern attitude. The archetypal treatment of Chinese practice towards nature, and its theoretical exposition (its symbolization), is to be found in the *Yu Kung* ("Tribute of Yu") section of the *Shu Ching*, one of the earliest authentic extant texts. It describes the activities of Yu the Great, the Sage King and founder of the first dynasty. I will quote just one passage which, I think, needs no comment. It opens:

Yu laid out the lands. Going along the mountains, he cut down the trees. He determined the high mountains and the great rivers . . .  
 The Heng and Wei rivers were made to follow their courses.<sup>20</sup>

It goes on to describe the produce and tribute of the whole empire—skins, silk from cultivated silkworms fed on specially planted mulberry-trees, salt, wood etc. Marshes were drained, rivers channelled, dikes constructed.

Such are the deeds of a model emperor — to control, to exploit, to dominate — in a real sense, to create — the natural environment. And later emperors followed the model. In Lawrence Kessler's recently published study<sup>21</sup> of the K'ang-hsi emperor (+1661-1772) there is recorded an illuminating exchange between the Emperor and his advisers over canals and waterworks. An official criticised the dike-building programme on the grounds that 'to be successful in river work, you must work in harmony with water's nature and not against it'. K'ang-hsi replied that this was pedantic nonsense, and that safety and prosperity were secured only by vigorous construction and repair works.<sup>22</sup> The official Chinese attitude was conservationist in an old sense, neither naive nor romantic.

There is another aspect of the 'Tributes of Yu' — that leads us directly on to a consideration of Chinese world-models. The last section of the chapter deals with the geographic basis of the sociopolitical division of the new empire. It is a highly complex ideal scheme of concentric squares with the capital at the centre. It is surrounded by the royal domain, then the domains of the princes, then the 'pacification zone', a barbarian zone, and the 'wild zone' of savages and nomads reaching to 'the four seas'.<sup>23</sup> It is notable that the empire, *t'ien-hsia*, is seen in this earliest Chinese cosmography, as squares within squares, surrounded by sea on all four sides. This was to become a dominant motif in late Chinese world views.

## SOME KEY TERMS IN EARLY CHINESE COSMOLOGY

One method of approaching the influence of their perceptions of the world on the symbolic formation process amongst the early Chinese is to examine some of the catch-phrases which relate to perceptions of time and space. It is these common-place cosmological and locational symbols, even more than systematic and speculative expositions which give us entry to the ancient Chinese mind.

It is impossible to do more here than list and briefly comment on a few of them. A full analysis of any one would require an exhaustive concordance of citations and contexts and a careful tracing of the development of usage. The major defect of the standard works on the subject like Marcel Granet's *La Pensée Chinoise* and Alfred Forke's *The World-Conception of the Chinese* is their tendency to catalogue with disregard for chronology and context. What is badly needed is a new and systematic analysis based on the pioneering work of these men but taking full advantage of the textual and interpretative work of Karlgren, Wang Kuo-wei and a host of others.

'Heaven and earth are the mother of all things' says the *Shu Ching*<sup>24</sup>, and heaven and earth, separately if not in conjunction<sup>25</sup> are the basic reference points in ancient Chinese cosmology and religious symbolization. I shall have more to say about 'earth' in the next section on time and space, but 'heaven' requires special treatment.

Heaven, *t'ien*, is symbolized as round, high, blue etc. W.E. Soothill has argued in his *Hall of Light*<sup>26</sup> that the *ming t'ang*, a temple-observatory of early Chinese kings, was crowned by a circular observatory dome which both symbolized 'heaven' and acted as an observation point for the all important correlation of 'heavenly' events in the imperial calendar. Even if one is sceptical, as I am, about the historical basis for the accounts of the *ming-t'ang* in the *Li Chi* and other ritual books, there is no reason to question this sun-derived symbol. Certainly, it was the form of the later Altar of Heaven in Peking, where it was combined with a square (= earth) base.

But *t'ien*, even in the early Chou period, meant far more than the physical sky. If one accepts, with H.G. Creel,<sup>27</sup> that *t'ien* was the sky-god of the Chou people, introduced by them into China proper, and equated with *ti* or *Shang-ti* of their Shang predecessors, then the religious overtones of 'heaven' preceded the correlation of its physical characteristics with transcendent powers. Alfred Forke appears to argue<sup>28</sup> that 'heaven' as an epitome of the spiritual powers behind the universe was derived from the 'physico-philosophical speculations' of Han dynasty thinkers like Tung Chung-shu, through a sort of sympathetic fallacy.<sup>29</sup> It seems to me far more likely to have been introduced early, by the Chou who, in the far west of the Yellow River valley were in contact with the common Central Asian sky-god conception.<sup>30</sup> The character for *t'ien* appears clearly in its earliest oracle-bone and bronze inscription form to be anthropomorphic<sup>31</sup> and its use in the classics, especially the *Shih Ching* and *Shu Ching*, to imply a personal, provident, all-seeing, rewarding and punishing god.<sup>32</sup> The use of 'heaven' to symbolize the High God is not, then, derived from a specific feature of the Chinese environment, but a near universal, and easily explicable phenomenon.

The shift from *t'ien* to *t'ien-hsia*, '(all) under heaven', as a synonym for the known world, is equally explicable. It has sometimes been argued that its common use in political rhetoric, as equivalent to 'the empire', is evidence of the pretensions of early Chinese rulers, claiming world dominance. I would argue, however, that it was a simple statement of fact, reflecting political reality as well as Chinese geographical knowledge at the time. The *Yu kung* chapter of the *Shu-ching*, with its picture of Chinese influence radiating out to a surrounding sea-boundary is not dissimilar to some early European

conceptions of the known world. *Ssu-hai nei*, 'within the four seas', is an equally common catch-phrase for the entire world, as in the famous passage from the *Analects* of Confucius 'within the four seas, all men are brothers' (XII.5). The implication is that Chinese civilization, and the power (*te*) of its ruler, radiates in diminishing force, as it were, to the ends of the earth. It was not, apparently, till Han times (perhaps 1st. or 2nd. centuries B.C.) that it was realised that in the Far West was another great civilization (*Ta Ch'ing*, 'Great Ch'ing'), and that the homeland of the newly introduced Buddhism lay across the great mountains to the south-west.

It was in the Han, too, that the role of the Chinese emperor as mediator between Heaven and Earth was systematised. It was implicit in the 'Mandate of Heaven' doctrine of the early Chou but it was left to Tung Chung-shu in the first century B.C. to put it together in characteristic mystagogic form:

Those who in ancient times invented writing drew three lines and corrected them through the middle, calling the character *wang*, 'king'. The three lines are Heaven, Earth, and man, and that which passes through the middle joins the principles of all three. Occupying the centre of Heaven, earth, and man, passing through and joining all three — if he is not a king, who can do this? Thus the king is but the executor of Heaven.<sup>33</sup>

Heaven has been brought to earth in the form of the Emperor, the 'son of Heaven'.

Granet writes of the Han system-makers that their category thinking was 'an attempt, long in the making, at the organization of experience'.<sup>34</sup> This is undoubtedly true but the traces of that long process of development are not easy to detect. In the case of the two chief categories, *yin/yang* and the 'five agents' (*wu hsing*) it is particularly difficult to follow their prehistory before they emerge in such Han collections as the *Huai-nan tzu* and the *Pu Hu Tung* and the appendices to the *I-Ching*. The earliest reference to *yin* and *yang* appears to be in one of the songs of the *Shih Ching*<sup>35</sup> but it is not certain that it is intended to refer to 'the primogential forces of nature' as Forke would have it.<sup>36</sup> Legge reads it simply as 'light and shade'<sup>37</sup> which is certainly the basic meaning of the terms. By the Han, however, they are the polar categories of all things, all activities. Further, they are the principles which determine the characteristic activities of heaven and earth.

The principle (*tao*) of heaven is round, that of earth is square. The square governs darkness, the round brightness. Brightness exhales

vapour, and therefore its external appearance is fiery. Darkness condenses vapour, and therefore its internal appearance is watery. That which exhales vapour loses it; that which condenses vapour produces it. So *yang* is active, while *yin* is passive.<sup>38</sup>

It is clear from this text in the second century B.C. *Huai-nan tzu* that we are dealing not with things, not even with natural forces or energies, but with metaphysical principles which can govern our perceptions of all reality.

The *wu hsing* or 'five agents' (often misleadingly translated by analogy with the Greek four as 'elements'), are less equivocally ancient in origin. Water, fire, metal, wood, and earth: they figure in several passages from indubitably ancient sections of the *Shu-Ching*.<sup>39</sup> Again, they are not so much things, physical elements, as categories into which all natural processes can be fitted. They served as the basis for the tables of correspondences beloved of Han thinkers. For example 'earth' corresponds to the colour 'yellow', to the direction 'centre', the planet 'saturn', the taste 'sweet', and the bodily organ 'heart'; 'fire' relates to 'red', 'south', 'Mars', 'bitter' and 'the lungs', and so on.

What is the purpose of these cosmic correspondence tables? Proto-scientific? Possibly. Political? To some extent, certainly, in that a successful bid for power was regarded as dependent on assuming the correct element. The Ch'in failed because they mistakenly relied on water, out of sequence. So, too, the late Han rebels, like the Yellow Turbans, used yellow regalia to signify their intention to succeed as 'earth', the failing 'fire' power to Han. But, even more fundamentally, they testify to the deep-seated human passion for order, to organise the chaos of experience in order to master it. What is required for a more full understanding is a structuralist analysis in the mode of Levi-Strauss. And just as structural analysis of mythology and social organisation is a necessary propaedeutic to the understanding of religion, so the 'five agents' theory is the key to many Chinese religious practices of the Han and later e.g. the five cult-centres at the capital, four in the suburbs, one in the centre; the five sacrifices to the five Heavenly Emperors; the seasonal sacrifices with an intercalary late Summer added to accommodate 'earth'; the abode of the dead in the Yellow Springs, deep in the earth.<sup>40</sup>

It is also the key to understanding those practices which make up the Chinese 'science' of *Feng-shui*, 'the wind and the waters', known popularly in the west as geomancy.<sup>41</sup> Again, it would be a mistake to regard it either as a pseudo-science, despite the elaborate 'compass' used by the diviner; or as pure superstition.<sup>42</sup> It seems in the end to be symbolic, 'a sustained and systematic metaphor' for human interaction,

and a rich source of archetypes for the organisation and humanisation of experienced reality.<sup>43</sup>

## SACRED TIMES AND SACRED SPACE

Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane* begins his analysis of 'the nature of religion' with an examination of 'sacred space' and 'sacred time'. As I have argued elsewhere<sup>44</sup> Eliade's thesis of discontinuity, and separation, as characterising the phenomenology of the sacred, is misleading, and nowhere more so than in the case of Chinese religion. Yet, he is surely correct to make conceptions of time and space the starting-point for an examination of the symbolization process we call religion. Characteristic or culture-specific conceptions of time and space will enter deeply into our higher order symbol-systems and so influence behaviour and social organisation. If the key-note of religion is transcendence, the spatial and temporal environment which is transcended must determine the conceptualization and symbolization of transcendence itself. Again, I have no intention of providing a full analysis but will content myself with a few observations about basic Chinese approaches to time and space.

Marcel Granet observes in *La Pensée Chinoise* that Chinese conceptions of time and space are characteristically concrete, not abstract; they relate to actual occasions, actual events.

Forming a complex of symbolic relations<sup>45</sup>, at once determining and determined, Time and Space are always imagined as a collection of groupings concrete and diverse, of locations and occasions.<sup>46</sup>

Sometimes this is characterized as a belief in 'the infinity of time and space'<sup>47</sup> but I think it is better represented as a belief in the indetermination of time and space. The passage from the Taoist book *Lieh-tzu*<sup>48</sup> from which Forke deduced belief in 'infinity' seems to me to argue for something quite different, the impossibility of conceiving limits to time and space. The point is an epistemological and logical one, not metaphysical.

Two important consequences follow. One is a comparative disinterest in ultimate origins, i.e. creation theories. The other is the predominance of spatial metaphors focussing on a central point.

It is one of the most curious features of early Chinese religious thought — which they share also with the Australian aborigines — that there are no Creation myths. True, there are, comparatively late, a complex of myths centering on a divine couple, Kung Kung and Nu

Wa, and a further cycle dealing with primal man, P'an Ku. But both may be explained as due to foreign influence, the latter especially with its close analogy to the Purusha myth of the Indian Vedas; and, in any case, there is no trace of them in the Confucian tradition or the early classics.<sup>48</sup>

There are not even cosmogonic myths in the strict sense. Taoist works, beginning with the *Tao Te Ching's* chapter 42:

The Tao produced one, the one produced two, the two produced three, and the three produced the ten thousand things, propose cosmogonic theories, but they seem to relate not so much to time as to a continuing process.

One other point noted by Granet in his exposition of ancient Chinese calendrical systems<sup>49</sup> is that an earlier emphasis on the solstices switched to one on the equinoxes. This he interprets in social terms as marking the progression from a primitive agricultural society's interest in points of change, to a hierarchical centralized society's emphasis on order and harmony. Its religious corollary is the shift from the cult of local gods of the soil to the royal cult of Heaven. Once more the symbolization of daily experience has influenced the most general or ultimate cultural symbol-system, the religious.

A parallel case is the influence of the conceptualization of space on religious preoccupations. The local deity of the village, the *t'u-ti kung* as he is called in Taiwan or *t'u-ti shen* as *t'u-ti lao-erh* elsewhere, is as his name suggests the guardian spirit of 'fields of the place'. His area of concern corresponds to the socio-economic range of the Chinese peasant, reaching no further than the nearest market-town.<sup>50</sup> A city god, on the other hand, a *ch'eng-huang* ('walls and moat (spirit)') is responsible for defence and order, for the higher level of administration. It was only the Emperor and his court who were concerned with the cult of Heaven.

Conversely, a sociologist might turn the argument on its head, and use the religious conceptions to deduce the effective range of bureaucratic power in traditional China. Arthur P. Wolf concludes a brilliant analysis of the inter-dependence of the earthly and heavenly hierarchies, with the observation:

In sum, what we see in looking at the Chinese supernatural through the eyes of the peasant is a detailed image of Chinese officialdom. This image allows us to assess the significance of the imperial bureaucracy from a new perspective. . . . Judged in terms of its administration arrangements, the Chinese imperial government looks impotent. Assessed in terms of its long-range impact on people, it appears to have been one of the most potent governments ever known, for it created a religion in its own image.<sup>51</sup>

To return, in conclusion, to the Sage King Yu's square universe, with the royal domain of 500 *li* in all directions at the centre, and the capital as the centre-point of that. Paul Wheatley has argued convincingly that the ancient Chinese city began as a cult-centre which only gradually, and as it were accidentally, acquired administrative and economic significance.<sup>52</sup> He cites in support Ode No. 305:

The Capital of Shang was a city of cosmic order,  
 The pivot of the four quarters.  
 Glorious was its renown,  
 Purifying its divine power,  
 Manifested in longevity and tranquillity  
 and the protection of us who come after.<sup>53</sup>

On this reading — and even Wheatley admits the translation is somewhat tendentious — the ancient Chinese city was a sort of microcosm, 'an *axis mundi* about which the kingdom revolved, (which) was laid out as an *imago mundi* in order to ensure the protection and prosperity "of us who come after"'.<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The ancient Chinese world-view, which in turn generated and sustained the religious symbol-system, was derived from the experience of an agrarian culture expanding from a centre in the Yellow River Valley to the limits of its known world. These limits which at first sight appear geographic are in fact cultural. To the north and west where no natural obstacles presented themselves as in the south-west, the boundaries were imposed by life-style. To proceed beyond a certain ill-defined point (later artificially marked by the Great Wall) was to exchange agriculture for steppe-nomadism. To the east, the Pacific Ocean offered no livelihood except at the price of another kind of nomadism. To the south, the primeval jungle and marshes made the spread of Chinese culture slow and arduous.

The real triumph of the Chinese was not the physical conquest and exploitation of this area, but the mental conquest and organisation of this world into a suitable place to live in. The achievement, beginning in the second millenium B.C., consolidated by the Han around the beginning of the Christian era, and continuing into modern times, gave Chinese civilization a poise, a harmony, an organic unity which both attracted and infuriated the Western barbarians whose civilization was based on quite contrary values — change, conflict and challenge.

Even when one version of the Western promethean vision — the Marxist — conquered China, many aspects of the older cultural synthesis were absorbed into the new order. 'The sinification of Marxism' was Mao Tse-tung's avowed aim which he interpreted as the application of a universal value-system to concrete Chinese conditions.<sup>55</sup> But those concrete conditions have in turn modified the cultural and political superstructure, in ways that perhaps Mao himself did not foresee in 1939. An agricultural society means peasant-based revolution if revolution there is to be. Peasants, used to a traditional world-order, projected into the leader aspects of the old heaven-sanctioned Emperor.<sup>56</sup> Chinese foreign policy, with its theory of the first, second and third worlds is, in many respects, 'a development of earlier Chinese world-models'. In the end the Chinese communist is Chinese, and he is Chinese because he lives in China — a truism, perhaps, but too often forgotten.

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> See A.L. March, *The Idea of China: Myth and Theory in Geographic Thought*, New York, 1974; A. Reichwein, *China and Europe*, London, 1925; V. Pinot, *La Chine et la Formation de l'Esprit Philosophique en France*, Paris, 1932; Tuan Yi-fu, *Topophilia*, Englewood Cliffs, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> 'Results and Problems of the Study of Oriental Despotism' in *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVIII, February 1969, p 361.

<sup>3</sup> See Ray Huang and Joseph Needham, "The Nature of Chinese Society: a Technical Interpretation" in *East and West*, n.s. XXIV. 3-4, Sept.-Dec. 1974, pp. 381-401; and Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, London, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> *The Social Reality of Religion*, London, 1969, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> See E.O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, London, 1959.

<sup>6</sup> See A. Fleming, "The Myth of the Mother-Goddess" in *World Archaeology*, 1, 1969-70, pp. 247-261.

<sup>7</sup> See R.M. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, New York, 1951

<sup>8</sup> R.M. and C.H. Berndt, *The World of the First Australians*, Sydney, 1964, p. 210.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to my student, Mrs. Wendy Robertson, for a convincing analysis along these lines in a recent essay.

<sup>10</sup> See, especially, ch. 1, "Peasant Religion" of Marcel Granet's *La Religion des Chinois*, recently translated by Maurice Freedman as *The Religion of the Chinese People*, Oxford, 1975 — with the caution that it is a reconstruction in the Durkheimian ahistorical mode.

<sup>11</sup> C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London, 1975, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90 and following, in his essay, "Religion as a Cultural System".

<sup>13</sup> pp. 452-3 from his "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight".

<sup>14</sup> *Ta-hsueh yen i-fu*, translated by March, *The Idea of China*, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> See especially his "Landscape Poetry in China and Europe", in *Comparative Literature*, XIX. 3, Summer 1967, pp. 133-215.

<sup>15a</sup> v. Sze Mai-mai, *The Tao of Painting: A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting*, New York, 1956; and J.S. Schmotzer, "The Graphic Portrayal of "All Under Heaven" (T'ien-hsia): A Study of Chinese World Views through Pictorial Representation", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Georgetown University, 1973.

<sup>16</sup> In J.N. Nurser, ed., *Living with Nature*, Canberra, 1973.

<sup>17</sup> *Mencius*, VI.A.8.

<sup>18</sup> D.C. Lau (Trans.) *Mencius*, Penguin, 1970, p. 165.

<sup>19</sup> Translated by Tuan Yi-fu in his *China* (The World's Landscapes, I), London, 1970, p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> The other is the Su Causeway, after Su Tung-po v. *Nagel's Encyclopaedia-Guide: China*, Geneva, 1968, pp. 1073-1074.

<sup>20</sup> I have followed, with some modifications, the translation of Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Document*, Stockholm, 1950, pp. 12 & 14.

<sup>21</sup> *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule, 1661-1684*, Chicago, 1976.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>23</sup> Karlgren, *The Book of Documents*, p. 18; cf. the elaborate diagrams in the notes to James Legges translation, *The Chinese Classics*, III, pp. 144-149.

<sup>24</sup> Legge, *Chinese Classics*, III, p. 281 — in a passage from the probably spurious "Great Declaration".

<sup>25</sup> The use of the term *t'ien ti* appears to be quite late, and to reflect Han dynasty naturalism.

<sup>26</sup> *The Hall of Light: A Study of Early Chinese Kingship*, London, 1951, esp. p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> H.G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, Vol. I, Chicago, 1970. appendix C, "The Origin of the Deity T'ien".

<sup>28</sup> In Book II of *The World-Conception of the Chinese*, London, 1925.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>30</sup> On Central Asian sky-gods see M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York, 1958, section 18, pp. 58-64.

<sup>31</sup> V. Creel, *Origins*, pp. 496-497.

<sup>32</sup> See D.H. Smith, *Chinese Religions*, London, 1968, Ch. 2.

<sup>33</sup> W.T. de Bary, Ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York, 1964.

<sup>34</sup> *Le Pensee Chinoise*, Paris, 1950 (1934), p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> No. 250 in Mao's traditional order — the *Kung-liu* song from the *Ta Ya* section.

<sup>36</sup> *World — Conception*, p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> *The Chinese Classics*, IV p. 488.

<sup>38</sup> Text from the *Huai-Nan-Tzu* in Forke, *World-Conception*, p.175, n (r) — my own translation.

<sup>39</sup> e.g. the *Hung Fan* v. Karlgren, *The Book of Documents*, p. 230.

<sup>40</sup> See the excellent treatment in Granet, *The Religion of Chinese People*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>41</sup> A more accurate term, given the emphasis on topology rather than mere 'earth' forms, might be 'topomancy' v S. Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy*, Vientiane, 1974, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Both approaches mar E.J. Eitel's standard, *Feng-Shui; or the Rudiments of Natural Science in China*, 1873, reprinted Cambridge, 1973. Feuchtwang and Andrew March in 'An Appreciation of Chinese Geomancy', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVII.2, February, 1968, pp. 253-267, redress the balance.

<sup>43</sup> See Feuchtwang, *Anthropological Analysis*, Part 7, 'Possible Conclusions'.

<sup>44</sup> 'Sacred and Secular in China' in *Australian Essays in World Religions*, ed. V.C. Hayes, Adelaide, 1977, esp. pp. 85-89.

<sup>45</sup> 'Conditions Emblematiques'.

<sup>46</sup> My own translation from *La Pensee Chinoise*, p. 89. For some important qualifications of Sronet's thesis, so far as time is concerned, see J. Needham, *Time and Eastern Man*, London, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> E.G. Forke, *World Conception*.

<sup>48</sup> Lieh-tzu, V. text and translation in Forke, *World Conception*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>48a</sup> V. D. Bodde, 'Myths of Ancient China' in S.N. Kramer, ed., *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, New York, 1961, esp. pp. 383,405.

<sup>49</sup> *La Pensee Chinoise*, p. 104.

<sup>50</sup> See G.W. Skinner, 'Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China', in *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIV.1, November, 1964, pp. 3-43.

<sup>51</sup> 'Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors', p. 145, in A.P. Wolf, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, Stanford, 1974.

<sup>52</sup> *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City*, Chicago, 1971.

<sup>53</sup> Text and translation, *ibid.*, pp. 449-450.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 450.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Mao Tse-tung, 'On the New Stage', (1939), in S.R. Schram, ed., *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, New York, 1963, pp. 112,115.

<sup>56</sup> See my article, 'Is Marxism Open to the Transcendent?' in *The New China: A Catholic Response*, ed., M. Chu, New York, 1977.