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### HeavenEarth



#### 1. Heaven-Earth, Yin-Yang

“Empty is the sky, Endless is the earth;

When winds blow grass low, look for the herd”

- Mongolian folk song

“Round heaven – square earth is an ancient and long lasting concept in China. A few years ago, when the Shanghai Museum designed a new building, it used a round heaven, square earth structure.

Earth is round, and the so called blue sky is only blue light being deflected downwards when sunlight passes the upper atmosphere, letting us see the colour blue in the space above; there is no actual existence of a blue sky. From the scientific point of view, there is neither round heaven nor square earth, just a poetic, philosophical expression, even a kind of superstition. But even superstitions have good causes. If a person stands on an open plain and looks around, he would see the horizon in all directions at the same distance, forming a circle, while the blue sky covers this circle, high in the middle and low at the edge like a hemisphere; on the other hand, the ground one sees is obviously flat, spreading out in all four directions in straight lines, and any figure formed by straight lines on four sides must be square.

The Chinese also had the concept of yin and yang at an early age. The Book of Change has the passage “The Ultimate brings about two Aspects; the two Aspects bring about four Appearances; the four Appearances bring about the eight Representations”, expressing the act of classifying objects and events. While this was a Zhou Dynasty book, its contents often refer back to ideas already existing in the Neolithic age. Things that divide into “two aspects” include heaven and earth, day and night, man and woman, black and white... From a philosophical point of view, these are all just manifestations of the same abstract concept of yin and yang and

are all equivalent in nature.

Having the opposites of yin and yang allows a dynamic world to arise, such as the interchange of day and night producing the flow of time, and sexual union between man and woman producing the continuation of human race... Yin and yang are co-existent, mutually enhancing yet mutually limiting; yin cannot exist without yang and yang cannot exist without yin, since each needs the other to define it; there is yin in yang and yang in yin, as in the Ultimate (Taiji) diagram, with a white dot inside the black and a black dot inside the white.

The Taiji diagram is a symbol of the Taoists. Like the Buddhist swastika (卐), also the symbol of the Animist cult of Tibet and the tribal sign of the ancient Qiangs), it was derived from a very old shaman diagram of two entangled snakes. On the page above there are several pictures of old stone carvings from various European sites, each showing an ancient snake-pattern swastika. The black dot in white and white dot in black were originally the eyes of the two snakes. Snakes tangled together in order to have sex, and ancient snake-worshipping tribes used the diagram as the symbol of fertility and reproduction, which then became identified with the productivity of farming, fishing and hunting, such that the figure took on the meaning of the basic elements of existence of the snake worshippers.

The Chinese Hua-Xia tribe was snake worshipping, such that its ancestral divinities, Fuxi, Nuwa and Yellow Emperor, were all human headed snakes. The ancient Hebrews also worshiped the snake: Eve could converse with the serpent, before she learnt to have sex with Adam, which was just a snake-centered fertility ritual. Ancient Egypt and many other regions also had the practice of snake worship. Wall paintings showing Fuxi and Nuwa with entangled tails were numerous in Han Dynasty tombs, but have also been found in Xinjiang indicating that in historical times those localities had similar rites.

In such diagrams Fuxi-Nuwa sometimes held up the sun and the moon, or a golden bird (representing the sun) and a jade hare (for moon, sometimes toad instead of hare), but more commonly they had a compass and triangle (gui-ju), which actually represented heaven and earth: the compass is used to draw the round and triangle to draw the square, in other words, round heaven and square earth. Therefore, Fuxi and Nuwa represented heaven-earth, male-female, as well as other yin-yang concepts.

In a picture on page 1 a compass from above crosses with a triangle below, representing the joining of heaven with earth as well as sex between man and woman. Strangely, such compass-triangle diagrams have not been seen in China, but appear frequently in Europe, such as in Greek myths (see illustration above from a Greek mythology book), witchcraft, even as the symbols of an international organization. Is this just coincidence? Or is there some fundamental reason for this?

## 2. Freemasons

“My Father’s house has many mansions” – Jesus Christ

In the West there is an international organization called the Freemasons, whose origin was the craftsmen’s guilds of medieval European towns. Today’s Freemasons are more likely to be in some other lines of work, especially vocations in which group cohesion is particularly important, such as policemen, with Masons membership making it easier to maintain mutual support and advancement with fellow members. The organization has various secret rites and worship practices, not to be divulged to outsiders, often giving rise to rumours that Masons are a cult that engages in witchcraft. Is there any solid information? The diagram on the previous page is from their own literature. The presence of the compass and triangle is of course familiar to craftsmen, but it happens to fit the legend of Fuxi-Nuwa. Mere coincidence? The two figures after it are symbols taken from material for European witchcraft. One has the compass and triangle, and the other is similar overall but has instead the Jewish Star of David, six pointed like the compass-triangle combination.

In short, compass-triangle not only appears in Chinese legend, Greek mythology, Freemason tradition and European witchcraft, but also has some connection to the ancient Hebrews; its presence is not coincidental, but systematic. (In each figure there is a serpent swallowing its own tail surrounding the six-point object, also a frequently seen item in European witchcraft; this will be further discussed below.)

Freemasons arose from the Knights Templar of the Crusades, who werededicating to the defense of the Jerusalem Temple, where they discovered ancient documents describing worship practices of the old Jewish tribes. On the basis of these, they formulated some unusual rites to be held in the Temple, which even then aroused suspicion among the other crusading groups, but these were tolerated in the interest of solidarity against immediate enemies. After the failure of the Crusades, the Templars brought the practices back to Europe where they encountered serious opposition, eventually leading to their banning by the French court. Under some pressure, the Pope dissolved the Knights Templar groups, confiscated their properties, and

agreed to the execution of some of the leaders. A number of members found refuge in Scotland, where they defused into the local craft organizations, gradually expanding their presence into an international one.

We see from the foregoing that the Freemasons preserved some very ancient worship practices and symbols, and these were shared between East and West. However, as each locality underwent centuries of belief system changes, the old practices fell into disuse and were forgotten, leaving just minor bits, often too fragmentary to make sense of and to be taken seriously.



### 3.The Mesh

“The gods’ mesh is loose, but it is everywhere” – Chinese proverb

In the diagram of the Masonic hall we can see a checkerboard floor, a common enough floor decoration, but again this happens to coincide with ancient Chinese artifacts, namely the mesh pattern frequently seen on Neolithic pottery and jade. While the major presence of such pottery was in the Yangshao sites of Gansu and Shanxi, it is common enough in other regions, and appears to have been connected to agriculture, the practice of burial after death, and pig raising; the old ideogram for Hua (one name for the Chinese people) contains several squares, possibly due to its being derived from the mesh pattern. Also, the Jerusalem Cross used by the Crusaders may have had the same mesh origin.

In comparison, the swastika came from the Indo-European nomads of west Asia, later in age because it was more difficult to domesticate cattle, goats and horses compared to pigs. Indo-Europeans practised cremation, and used little pottery which is difficult to move around and easily broken, keeping their things more often in sheepskin or woven wool sacks. The origin of the mesh pattern might have been fish scales, snake skin or fishing nets; the ancient texts claim that Fuxi invented the fishing net, so that the mesh pattern may have been his personal sign.

The wide spread of the mesh pattern was shown by the following passage from the Record of the Kings’ Reigns of Tibet: “The King furthertransformed into a new Presence, and soon completed the construction of all of the Roshia Hall. He had drawn on the four doors the figure of the stupa, to please the lamas; on the hall pillars the shape of the Rod, to please the chanter monks; on the four corners the swastika, to please the animists; and also the mesh pattern, to please the Tibetans.” While the books was supposedly describing events during Tang times, it was mentioning ancient folk practices. The Tibetans and the ancient Qiangs had some characteristics of the Indo-Europeans as well as the Easterners, and appear to have been the product of a merging of people from east and west. Also, some jade human figures, uncovered from tombs of the Zhongshan state from the Warring States period, have the mesh pattern on their skirts. Zhongshan was known as White Savages, and appear to be former nomads. The mesh pattern also appears on skirts, sometimes sleeves, of jade dancing girls of the Eastern Zhou period.

The mesh pattern is also connected to dragons. From the 80s onward, a number of Neolithic sites and artifacts were discovered in Inner Mongolia and Liaoning province, collectively known as Hongshan Culture. Most notable among the artifacts were the jade objects, in particular jade dragons with pig heads and snake bodies, some with joined head-tail known as “pig-dragons” or “beast-shaped slit rings”, some with separated

head and tail looking like the English letter c, known as C-dragons. Further, somewhat earlier or later sites and stylistically related artifacts were also discovered in nearby localities like Zhahai, Xinglongwa, Zhaobaogou, Xiajiadian and others.

The mesh pattern is present on the forehead and chin of the C-dragon, on the dragon bodies on a pottery urn from Zhaobaogou, and on a human-faced fish, with tail curled back to touch the head, found on a pottery jar unearthed in a distant site in Xiping, Gansu. Now tail joining head brings us back to the snake swallowing its own tail in the European witchcraft figures – we have travelled a full circle.

#### 4. Pig dragons

“In my end is the beginning” – T S Eliot

The tail-swallowing snake of western witchcraft has some resemblance to the human-faced fish of Xiping, but even greater resemblance with the Hongshan pig dragon. Pig dragons may either have the tail joined to the head or separate by a small gap, but generally the joined ones look more primitive and older, later evolving to the separate type. Tail joining head expresses the idea of “have” and “have not”, or begin and end, being the same, in a perpetually evolving cosmos. This is a Taoist concept, but has its origin in ancient shaman practices. The contribution of Laozi and others was about extending the abstract philosophy to apply to society and life, deriving such political ideals as a nihilist/naturalist government.

There is however an ancient pig-dragon story in Chinese legends, related to Chang-e the moon goddess: the archer Hou-yi fell in love with the fairy of Luo River, and shot her husband the River God whose name was Feng-yi, which is actually the same story as Hou-yi killing Feng-xi and capturing his wife Xuan-qi the Dark Lady – Feng-yi and Feng-xi are just different pronunciations of the same name. In Qu Yuan's poem “Divine Queries” there was a passage concerning Dark Lady murdering Yi: “Zhuo marrying the Fair Fox, Lady Xuan co-conspiring; for all Yi's archer skills, he was jointly eaten”, which referred to the same event as the story of Chang-e stealing Yi's life-elixir and Feng-meng killing Yi: as Yi found new women, Lady Xuan avenged herself by conspiring with Feng-meng to have him killed.

The River God Feng-yi was a dragon, and Feng-xi was a pig (in some stories known as Feng-zhu); so he was a pig-dragon; Lady Xuan, Chang-e, Fair Fox, Nine-tailed fox... were different names used to various stories to refer to the same woman (Zhuo was a Xia Dynasty usurper who killed an earlier usurper called Yi – it is not clear whether the two Yi's are the same man.) Hou-yi's tribe worshipped the sun, while Chang-e's tribe would have worshipped the moon, so that she was said to have gone to the moon when she escaped back to her own tribe after murdering Yi. The moon waxes and wanes, showing the ability to return to “life” after “death”, hence the moon tribe was said to have the elixir of life. (Other issues relating to the moon tribe or Xuan tribe will be discussed later.)

The idea of the dragon also had many variations. Some of the ancient snake worshipping tribes noted tornadoes occurring in spring and summer, looking to them like a divine serpent waking up from winter hibernation and rising to heaven, with its devastatingly powerful tail on the ground and its head in the clouds where wind, rain, thunder and lightning all occur, thus acquiring the idea of the dragon as the god for water and thunder. The ancient site associated with Shen-nong (Divine Cultivator), the town of Chen (Huai-yang today), has an ideogram that was originally the same as that for lightning, and Shen-nong tribe probably started off as Shen-long or Divine Dragon tribe, evolving from the human-headed, snake-bodied Fuxi-Nuwa tribe. In the beginning the dragons had no legs, as those unearthed in Zhahai, Zhaobaogou and Wengniute County all show, and such attachments as body scales, deer horns, fish tail, bird claws, etc, were added later. An earlier diagram shows the stone assembly dragons of Puyang and Zhahai.

Another type of jade object unearthed in Hongshan in large quantities was the so called “curvy cloud”. The primitive versions had four arms like the swastika, also presenting the idea of entangled serpents, and the curvy lines resembled the dragon pattern on the Zhaobaogou pottery urn shown earlier but without the mesh patterns. Later, two such objects were joined together into the more complex, “large curvy cloud” object, whose middle part was then shrunk and peripheral parts expanded to produce the “ghost face” cloud objects, finally simplifying into a bird-like object. However, joining two simple cloud objects with one upside down starts a different line of evolution, leading to a completely different final result.

Jade has a special importance in ancient China because it was supposed to be food for the gods and

essential offerings during ritual sacrifices, which were led by the tribal chiefs, who therefore needed to decorate themselves with jade hangings. Further, the jade stones' great strength allows them to be ground into sharp points and thin blades as weaponry, and jade axes and spears were carried by the tribal chiefs, so that jade objects became the symbols of power and status.

Various fragments in historical records about the Xia and Shang dynasty downfalls mention the acquisition of jade:

“Chancellor Yi was aide to Cheng-tang as he conquered King Jie...the jade treasures were captured, and Jie was exiled to Nanchao”

“King Wu picked up Shang's archived jade treasures amounting to fourteen thousand, and jade pendants one hundred eighty thousand”

This is because jade represented power, leading the rulers to urgently capture the palace jade collections. Zuo Zhuan also has “Spring of Year 15 Lord Zhu arrived for an audience. Lord Zhu held the jade too high and his expression was lofty; Our Duke stooped to receive the jade and his expression had condescension”

The Ancient Book also mentions that Shun, after his succession, met with his lords and governors, handing back the jade objects received from them afterwards. The editor Kong Xida explained the reasons for receiving and returning jade:

“The ceremonial (jade) was originally granted by Yao. Receiving and returning, it was as if Shun granted these anew, so that they subordinated themselves to Shun, to officiate the start of a new overlordship.”

In short, a whole set of ceremonial rituals were related to jade. When a vassal went to see an overlord, he presented jade to express his subordination, while the superior returning the jade expressed his satisfaction with the subordinate, who was being allowed to retain his position. (This procedure may have originated from visitors putting down weapons upon arrival, retrieving them upon departure.)



## 5. Silk

"Spring breezes never cross Jade Pass" – Tang Poet Wang Zihuan

The Han dynasty opened the Silk Road to central Asia. Silk was the export but what was the import? The fact that the mountain pass at the end is called Yu-men or Jade Pass, showed the importance of Eastern Turkistan jade for the demand in China, and it came from Hetian in the Kunlun Mountains, beginning to be imported in large amounts during Shang Dynasty.

But silk was also of great importance in Chinese culture. Historical Records has “Yu met his lords at Tushan, with ten thousand states presenting jade and cloth”, and even in Han times, lords presented “jade and note” during imperial audiences to express submission.

Cloth and note were both silk, and presentation of silk as a sign of subordination was illustrated in legends by “After Yellow Emperor killed Chi-you, the Silkworm Goddess submitted silk”.

Since silk was important, only persons of status were allowed to do weaving, with frequent mentions of weaving princesses:

“The grandchild of Emperor Zhuangxi was Maid Xiu. Maid Xiu was weaving, and an egg descended from the black bird; Maid Xiu swallowed it, to give birth to Da-ye...”

“Queen E lived in Xuan Palace, weaving at night; sometimes she toured in the day riding on the floating wood...she met a divine boy, calling himself son of White Emperor”

During Spring-Autumn and Han periods there were still high ladies doing weaving:

Zuozhuan: “When Lord Wen returned from the palace, he bowed to (his mother) Lady Jingjiang, who was weaving... Book of Poems says ‘Ladies’ formal task, silkworm weaving to halt’ meaning that weaving was the official task of ladies, not to be halted without ritual cause”

Historical Records “Concubine Bo was dispatched to the Palace Weaving House...the Han King entered Weaving House, saw the beauty of Concubine Bo, and ordered her to be sent in to his Harem”

Book of Han “King Jing of Han: ‘I personally plow, and the Queen personally keeps silkworms, to provide for the food offerings and ceremonial cloths of the ancestral temple, an example for the realm”

This is not just for the purpose of encouraging work and frugality, but also embodies concepts of religious rituals. There are actually similar stories in the west, though greatly altered: in Sleeping Beauty, the princess was forbidden to touch a spindle, at risk to life; there is also the story of the village girl weaving straw into gold with the help of demon Rumpelstiltskin, enabling her to marry the King.

Earlier it was mentioned Lady Xiu became pregnant after swallowing an egg while weaving; there are other stories of princesses swallowing eggs:

“The three maidens were bathing, and saw the Black Bird dropping its eggs; Jiandi took one and swallowed it, hence became pregnant with Qi (founder of Shang tribe)”

“The Yourong tribe had two exiled maidens, for whom a nine storey tower was constructed, and whose meals were accompanied by music. The Emperor sent the swallow to visit them, and it sang enchantingly. The two maidens loved it and strived to catch, covering it with a jade basket. Later they uncovered it to see; the swallow left two eggs.”

Bathing and egg-swallowing were part of the fertility ritual of the black bird tribe, but rituals would not have got Jiandi and Lady Xiu pregnant; pregnancy was due to men participating in the rituals and engaging in sex with the women. These ancient rites were forgotten by the times of Zhou and Han, but some traces were left behind:

The story of Cowboy and Weaving Girl was written into a book in the Jin Dynasty, but was mentioned in Zhou and Han poems and related to very ancient events. The “fairies from heaven” went to Yao Pond to bathe, not because they got sweaty bodies, but to hold a fertility ritual; the Weaving Girl was a daughter of the Heavenly Emperor, in other words, a princess who did weaving; the Cowboy and his bull were “exiled from heaven”, not because they were contaminated by earthly desires, but because in matriarchal tribes males had to leave upon puberty, to prevent their having sex with females of the same tribe, and they only had one chance per year for sex by participating in the fertility ritual of some other tribe. The Weaving Girl was disobedient: instead of returning uphill to continue her weaving work, she was taken home by the Cowboy, requiring the Heavenly Emperor to send heavenly soldiers to bring her back. The Emperor and Queen Mother, however, did not

punish the Cowboy, because he was entitled to go to the Yao pond, and continued to go once a year to meet his love. The story had numerous romantic parts added on by later writers, such as Cowboy being turned into the filial man Dong Yong, whose good deeds were rewarded with good fortune, and magpies descending to form a bridge over which the lovers could meet, from the original "black bird descending" of the fertility ritual. The original story was neither romantic nor sensational.

Legends also have several stories of princesses getting lost, with mulberries making an appearance:

"Bu-fei was Fuxi's daughter who drowned in the Luo River, and became its goddess"

"Red Emperor's daughter learnt divine craft and lived on the mulberry tree of Nanyang E Hill. On New Year's Day she gathered sticks to build a nest, completing it on 15 January. Sometimes she appeared as a white bird, sometimes as a woman. The Emperor was sorrowful seeing this. Unable to tempt her to descend, he set the tree on fire, and the maiden rose to heaven; hence the name Princess's Mulberry."

"The youngest daughter of the Emperor, named Yao-ji, who died before adulthood and was entitled to the Wu Hill Platform, with her spirit identified with the grass"

The various stories had the commonality of the Emperor's daughter coming back after death and being identified with some nature-related romantic role; this is because they were versions of fertility maiden. The mulberry was the tree of life in Chinese mythology, so that the stories were connected with that of the Weaving Girl. Girls drowning may also be related to virgin sacrifices to the river God in later times.

West Asian traditions also have a tree of life, originally a palm, with some similarity between the story of Phoenix resurrecting on the tree of life and that of the heavenly Emperor's daughter turning into the white bird, and to the following

"The Emperor's daughter drowned in the East Sea, turning into the Jingwei bird, which called its own name, and constantly picked sticks and stones of West Hill to fill up the East Sea"

The story of Fuxi-Nuwa and flood was actually a tsunami washing away the whole clan leaving behind just the two; the story of Jingwei was also that of a tsunami, which washed away the Nu-wa tribe, with survivors seeking refuge in a bird tribe, throwing stones into the sea in a ceremony of remembrance. The romantic idea of Jingwei's defiant spirit seeking vengeance on the sea was again a later addition.

The Fu-sang tree in the legends was originally a palm, which has leaves growing from the top of the trunk but no branches; the fabled Fu-sang tree was said to be branchless, and the name Fu-sang is usually understood to mean Japan. A Liang Dynasty book records that around 499AD a monk returned to China from Okinawa and talked about a distant country in the east that had abundant Fu-sang trees, whose leaves resembled the ayous (abachi) tree, which too has branches at the top of the trunk only. The bark of the Fu-sang tree was used to weave cloth. It may be deduced from the story that coastal tribes in China also used the Fu-sang palms for cloth making, but later moved inland where no palms grew, and used the name on the mulberry tree (sang) after finding silk to replace palm fibre, and giving the mulberry (and branches-at-the-top ayous) tree the divine status of the tree of life.

## 6. Xuan

"The source of all wonders" – Laozi

Legends frequently use the character "xuan"

"Zhuanxu the black spirit Xuan-min, Emperor of the North"

"Gaoyang then gave the commission to Yu in Xuan Palace..."

"Xuan bird with Heaven's mandate, descend to give Shang birth"

"Qi was the Xuan King, assisting Yu in the flood work and was granted a major state"

One meaning of xuan was the colour black, arising from the moon worshipping clan that held fertility rites at night, a tradition still maintained in some minority tribes in China. The name "xuan-wu" is used for the snake-turtle combination, originally a snake-frog combination with snake representing male and frog female, in other words a fertility symbol. Guang Xuan Palace was the moon palace to which Chang-e escaped after murdering her husband Hou-yi. Xuan is also a word frequently mentioned in relation to Laozi, with its meaning commonly taken as "abstract and obscure." This reflects the primeval nature of fertility being linked to an even more fundamental role in the cosmos, and then to philosophical discussions about the fundamental abstractions of thought.

The xuan idea of thing-nothing being equivalent and able to change into each other, expressed in the snake swallowing its own tail, actually comes from observations of the real world: if you make some people better off, then in relative or even absolute terms, others become worse off; hence, more and less create each other, and by extension, thing and nothing create each other. By further extension, everything in the world came from nothing, and it is unnecessary to ask where the world came from, when it started and when it will end. Since everything is nothing, we ought to live according to the principle, and since richer rulers usually means they are taking too much from the people making them worse off, governments should be minimal. Trying too hard is counter productive, and simple minded citizens produce a peaceful state.

There was some argument over what era Laozi lived in, since some of his most cynical thoughts seem to be the product of a turbulent and harsh age, such as late Warring States. However, not long ago a version of his Daodejing was unearthed in graves of the Warring State period, showing that his writings existed at least by early Warring States period, and the current versions included editing by later people. The biography contained in Historical Records, putting him into the same era as Confucius but slightly older in age, seems realistic. Warring States / early Han books like Zhuangzi and Hanfeizi frequently mention Laozi and quote from his book, thus providing independent confirmation of his and his writings' earlier existence.

Laozi's thoughts have considerable exploitability, with the result that he was elevated to the status of a great divine, not mere sage. Whenever governments find some things beyond their control, they would justify their own inactivity by citing Laozi; Zhuangzi's nihilist ideas are quite different from Laozi's social and political agenda, but he wanted to drag Laozi along as his fellow hermit; the Taoist movements that arose later were based on ancient shamanism mixed with later propaganda methods, but claimed Laozi as their founder; Hanfeizi also tried to be Laozi's disciple, because he wanted rulers to maintain a obscure and deep demeanour so that subordinates act according to explicitly specified rules rather than try to outguess how to please the boss.

Around the time, the Hebrews also happened to be writing down their own abstract thoughts, probably from the same concept of nothingness: God had no shape, no name and no locality, but was all powerful and everywhere, in contrast to other middle east tribes that worshipped ore concrete objects, whether images, statues, or objects in nature. The namelessness of God actually was linguistic: Jehova was initially an all vowel chant I-E-O-U-A which could not be written as the early Semetic alphabets only had consonants. It was the Greeks who invented vowels later, by taking some of the Phoenician letters for consonants that have no counterparts in Greek and denoting vowels with them.

## 7. Confucius is also not obscure

"Criticize Lin Biao; criticize Confucius" - a slogan

of the late Cultural Revolution period

Confucius, who was briefly Laozi's pupil in the Zhou Dynasty archival office, shares Laozi's fate in that his name is worth exploiting, so that he appears as a character in numerous stories and fables to illustrate ideas with no relation to his own, and gets the blame for any old tradition and practice that an author wishes to condemn.. Numerous biographical details told about Confucius are highly suspect. To discuss just one: he was said to have decided to leave Lu state when the duke, too busy watching a troupe of dancing girls, failed to get sacrificial pork distributed to him after a state ritual. It seems unlikely that this was a task requiring the Duke's personal attention instead of designated temple officials. The real reason of not getting a share of the pork was that Confucius had lost his state position because of disagreement with the lord in power, causing him to go to neighbouring states in search of a suitable position. With all this misinformation, it is not surprising that Confucius's actual ideas mostly get ignored or misunderstood.

When Confucius extols "ren", he was not talking about mere kindness and modesty in inter-personal relationship, or even humanistic philosophy, but about governing - how rulers should conduct themselves in a way that maintains an orderly community and maximizes benefit to society. In words, "ren" is more "benevolence" or "statesmanship" than "humanity". "Restrain yourself and observe conventions; ren is within" makes no sense unless one understands it in the context of power: it is all too easy for rulers to become arrogant or over-assertive, so that from the very start one must exercise self-restraint and accept social limitations on one's power; as we know, very few people in power have known to exercise such restraints, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely. In fact ren is such a distant ideal that even Confucius himself did not claim to have achieved it, merely that he was constantly learning and striving towards this goal. The concept of moderation was similarly addressed towards the rulers, expecting them to consider the various contradictions in the society to and strive for consensus and compromise. "Noble persons have harmony rather than agreement" is also about governing: persons of high principles would work together for public benefit even when they have different views, whereas "base men" would engage in conflicts about real or imaginary benefits even when they do not appreciably differ in ideas.

The Zhou Conventions, formulated by the Duke of Zhou during the founding era of Zhou State and frequently praised by Confucius, specified various procedures of worship, state ceremonies and audiences, and taxation. From Confucius's "when worshiping gods, be as if gods are present", he was skeptical about spiritual matters. However, the ceremonies have social functions, by having the community worshiping common ancestral gods as a form of recognition of social cohesion and ruler legitimacy, while regular audiences reinforce the idea of ranking among those participating and looking on. At the same time, the ceremonies on plowing, harvesting, archery, schooling, etc, involved the rulers in expressing respect for farmers, elders, soldiers, scholars, etc. In short, the conventions were socially relevant rather than mystical.

Similarly, the Confucian "uncrowned king" rignarole was actually a highly realistic social idea: rulers need to fulfill an educational role in setting an example of good conduct and getting his subjects to share his thoughts. This was dismissed by the Legalists as ponderously ineffective, but the quick collapse of Qin Dynasty soon illustrated the fatal weaknesses of simple reliance on harsh laws and strict officials, with the tendency to produce a society of rule manipulators and evaders. The idea of a spiritual softening of the rule of law and exercise of power, however, quickly took on mystical overtones, a problem that still plagues Confucianism today, while his role of spiritual leader got confused with that of a divine.

## 8. Music

"Where sincerity reaches, metal and gold open" - Chinese proverb

Besides legends of the Xuan (Dark) Maiden, there is also the Su (Fair) Maiden, about whom the most familiar is the Su-nu Book, on sexual techniques, which reflects her original role of fertility goddess. Su-nu also happens to be related to music

"The Great Emperor asked Su-nu to play the 50-string thither, which sounded mournful and the Emperor could not stop weeping; hence the thither was cut down to 25 strings"

but the musical involvement was due to the same cause, for fertility and harvest worship:

"In the days when the Rustic Soil Clan ruled the world, winds were excessive and hot air settled, with all vegetation growing loose and fruits failing to ripen; so Scholar Da made the 5-string thither, to bring cool air and pacify the living things"

From this fragment, we see that the five string harp had the function of producing plant fertility, allowing the living things to thrive. "During his time, Shun made the five string harp to serenade the south wind" was along the same line.

The Dark Maiden also played music, inventing the war drum for Yellow Emperor. However, the drum was originally used for fertility rites too, and is still used this way today among some minority tribes, with the pounding of sticks on the drum thought of as being analogous to sexual intercourse. That was before the idea of war existed at all. Xuan-nu Book is another text about sex. The Chinese ideograms for both Su and Xuan contain part of the ideogram for silk, showing that Su-nu and Xuan-nu were originally the silk-mulberry goddesses, associated with the mulberry tree of life.

Another set of ancient texts relate music with the phoenix and Shun:

"He then composed the Great Shao tune; after nice verses of the Piped Shao, the phoenix joined the rites, the stones were pounded, and the animals danced"

which described the heaven-worship of his tribe: after nice verses of Shao has been played, the tribal chief, dressed as the phoenix, descends on the stage to be honoured by his subordinates, who were dressed in their totem costumes. The Shun tribe made music with thither, pipe and stone chimes; later bronze bells were used, and the mention of spirit metal and stone above was really about music.



## 9. Selecting the wise

"Throne or love?" - Chinese saying

Yu was supposed to be so preoccupied with flood work that he passed by his home three times without going in to see his family, and paid no attention to his son, an example of dedication and self sacrifice. In actual fact, this was merely a misunderstanding of ancient world: In matriarchal societies children were brought up in their mother's tribe, with the husband having neither rights nor duties towards them. The fairy tale of Yu turning into a bear to dig soil, and his embarrassed wife turning into a stone, which split to return his son to him, hinted that Yu's original tribe had the bear totem, and after joining his wife's tribe for a period, he left with his son, an act that deviated from matriarchal practice and signaled a transition towards a patriarchal system. Stories about Yu going nude into the tribe of the naked people, taken to mean "in Rome do as the Romans", was also a misunderstanding: he was participating in the fertility rites of the Tushan tribe, and found favour with the princess, thus attaining chiefdom. King Zhou of Shang was supposed to have build ponds of wine and forests of meat, among which naked men and women chased each other, was just holding fertility rites, which the later, less romantic people no longer understood.

In matriarchal societies, property and power descended from mother to daughter, and men attained these by marrying the right women. When Yao chose Shun as his successor, it was immediately necessary to marry Shun to his two daughters (no competition for inheritance from multiple sons in law). Yao himself attained his position by marrying his wife Nuhuang, Female Sovereign. The flood relief achievements of Yu provided him with an unusual status, without having to be son in law of Shun (who was only slightly older), but Shun showed favour to Yi, choosing him as son-in-law with planned succession after Yu, but Yu's son exploited his father's prestige to overthrow the plan, firmly establishing the practice of patriarchal succession.

Yellow Emperor was supposed to have exiled his sons, actually just sending them to other tribes to be son-in-laws and future chiefs. Similarly, Zhuanxu was supposed to have been raised in the tribe of Shaohao, but

later went north to be chief of a tribe. However, the story of his three sons all turning into demons elsewhere, appears to mean that they were extremely unpopular with the people they were sent to govern, and may explain the story of disasters and wars of Zhuanxu's reign, to be further discussed later.

Because the male chiefs in matriarchal societies were just managers "employed" by their wives, their positions were often unstable and replaceable. Even in patriarchal times there were residual practices, with the clearest records in the Tibetan history texts, whereby a king was supposed to abdicate and disappear when his son reached adulthood:

"The son of heaven acting as king in human world, returning to heaven afterwards as people witnessed with their eyes...all the kings mentioned above were like this, ascending to heaven when the prince could ride horse"

This was actually just a ritual of sacrificing the old king to heaven, letting the new king succeed. Chinese tribes had the same practice, though historical records were obscure:

"Heaven sent a yellow dragon to take Yellow Emperor up; the people were unwilling to let him go and held onto his clothes, boots and sword, but the will of heaven was hard to oppose, and eventually Yellow Emperor rode the dragon and ascended"

Stories of Yu's father being cut with knife, upon which he either turned into a dragon, or Yu emerged from his body, Yu himself "disintegrated" to cure the flood, and others, all hinted at the same practice. A similar story existed in Korea and in various European versions detailed in Fraser's Golden Bough.

Another frequently mentioned story is a ruler falling asleep for several days and dreaming of going to heaven, where he heard wonderful music. This appears to be derived from the above discussed practice of regicide: instead of dying to let his successor take over, the old king prefers to revive and succeed himself after going to heaven and hearing divine music. Yet another derivation is the story of stealing fire from heaven. Even in Han times, there was still an annual Cold Food Day on which households went without fire, till the evening when "heavenly flame" was sent out from the palace to relight everyone's stoves.

The practice was probably related to Zhuanxu's "separation of heaven and earth", with his "heaven tribe" maintaining the only sacred fire to worship heaven, while other tribes were to obtain their heavenly flames from his tribe as a sign of subordination. The ancient agricultural practice of burning away vegetation in spring to clear the land for crops, with ashes providing fertilization, meant that the provision of fire was done according to a calendar maintained by the heaven tribe, and the person(s) in charge of the fire also had the responsibility of making astronomical observations to know the annual cycle of seasons.

#### 10. Joining heaven and earth

"The grey disc to honour heaven; the yellow block to honour earth" - from

the text Zhou Rituals

Around the same time the Hongshan tombs were being discovered in the 80s, archaeologists found large numbers of even grander Neolithic tombs around Lake Tai in the Yangzi delta, giving them the general name of Liangzhu Culture. Shown below is an excavated "cong" or "holed jade block", large enough to be called the cong monarch, and having Liangzhu's characteristic "demon face" and bird reliefs.

Around 4000 years ago all traces of the culture disappeared, probably due to westward migration caused by floods, and the Shun tribe, which moved from coast regions and sought refuge with the Yao tribe in central China, could be part of this. The feather crown worn by the Liangzhu demon fitted the descent of phoenix ceremony of the Shun tribe, but is also related to the legend of Xingtian, the fighter who continued battling Yellow Emperor even after his head was chopped off, using his breasts as eyes and navel as mouth. (The rather prominent breasts hint that the original deity was female).

The importance of the feather crown was indicated by the fact that the ideogram for "sovereign" huang was originally "feather" above "king", and Zuozhuan has a story of the Duke of Zheng having an exiled son killed

because of his collection of feather crowns, which hinted at excessive ambition.

A mention of the origin of the word "emperor" di is also in order: it was from the bundled reed figure used as the idol for worship, a harvest practice still seen in Europe today, with the last bundle of wheat being tied together for worship during harvest festivities (the thinking being that the corn spirit would move away from the sickle during harvesting, ending up in the last bundle). During Zhou Dynasty it was part of Chu state's feudal duty to provide reeds used in ceremonies: wine was poured onto the bundled reed figure, symbolizing the god drinking wine. It could be seen that while "huang" came from hunting bird tribes, "di" came from agricultural tribes.

The structure of the cong has a square cross section with round portions at upper and lower ends, for round heaven and square earth, and a hole in the middle denoting the linking up between the two. The demon face appears to be related to the taotie monster face that is characteristic of Shang bronze utensils, while the two pairs of eyes might be related to the ghost-expelling, four-eyed fang-xiang mentioned in texts of Zhou ceremonies. However, for the most part, by Zhou times the shamanistic significances of the jade objects had been forgotten, while jade, often in somewhat different shapes and more decorative forms, continue to be used for ritualistic purposes with everyone vaguely acknowledging their importance without really understanding it. Confucius was quoted to attribute to jade various fine properties analogous to desirable characteristics of the noble person, which only serves to show that he too did not know the real reasons for the importance of jade.



## 11. Out of Africa

“Every road leads to Rome” – European saying

DNA tests have shown that all of the world's population originated in Africa, leaving the continent probably 60,000 years ago and reaching Australia 50,000 years ago already; by the time they reached China it was quite late.

Three routes led from Africa to China: the fishing tribes came along the coast via India and Southeast Asia; the hunting tribes went north from West Asia to the great plains of East Europe and Kazakstan, followed the mammoth and elk herds to Siberia and reached Manchuria thereafter, with some going on to North America. The nomadic tribes drove their herds from valley to valley, oasis to oasis, and reached northwestern China along a route that later was to become the silk road; this is however a more difficult process that occurred later.

There are various archaeological sites dating from 7-8000 years ago in northwestern, northeastern and coastal China, but where are the older sites? Most probably under the sea, submerged when the glaciers started melting more than 10,000 years ago. Therefore, the earliest people probably came by sea, expanding inland along the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers, and northward along the coast; those going north would have met the hunting tribes, and going west would meet the nomads, with merging producing new versions of culture. The Yi people of Shangdong and Hebei, with the ideogram for Yi being "big bow", would have been hunters coming down from Siberia. Qiang and Jiang both had "goat" as the upper half, showing that they came from goat herders. The Qiangs were closely associated with the Di (bottom) people, who farmed in the lowlands while the Qiangs herded goats uphill, closely matching the relation between the Jiangs and the Jis, the two tribes whose alliance overthrew the Shangs to form the Zhou Dynasty. The Dis, Jiangs and Qiangs claim descent from Shennong the Divine Cultivator, while the Jis claim descent from Yellow Emperor. The westward migration of the coastal tribes and their subsequent return eastward injected new genes and new technology, often causing major social changes, some of it captured in legends.

Unfortunately, a major historical gap existed in the middle part of the third millennium BC, between the times

of Zhuanxu and Yao; the person who supposedly comes in between, Emperor Hao the nephew of Zhuanxu and father of Yao, was unlikely to be an actual historical personage, because stories about him, such as one wife giving birth to 10 sons and another to 12 moons, seem carryovers from a much older, mythological age. Because both Shang and Zhou founders were conceived during fertility rituals with no identifiable father, they were assumed to be the sons of the heaven emperor, so that Emperor Hao became a person that conveniently came between Zhuanxu and Yao, who as the contemporary of the two tribal founders, became known as Emperor Hao's son as well. This plugging of the historical gap did nothing to increase our knowledge of the "dark age".

From our sketchy information, it seems that Zhuanxu's "separation of heaven and earth", putting his own tribe above the others, caused a major rebellion, with additional trouble due to flooding. The eight tribes of Zhurong, from which the southern state of Chu and the minority Miao people claimed descent, probably escaped the disasters migrating southwards. The vacuum north of the Yellow River was later filled by the Yao tribe, whose origins were obscure, notwithstanding the not-very-useful claim that he too was the son of Emperor Hao, with the Shun tribe joining in from the east and Yu tribe coming from the west, so that a tribal alliance re-emerged after the chaos. This, unfortunately, is about all that could be deduced about the origins of the early Chinese state that has some sort of official chronicle. Ancient Book has decrees and stately conversations from Yao onwards, however dubious they may be.

## 12. Between the four oceans

"All men are brothers" - Jesus Christ

European missionaries began to arrive in China during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. They quickly noticed that certain Chinese legends are similar to parts of the Old Testament. Over the last few hundred years many authors looked into this, trying to link biblical figures to Chinese legendary personages, usually with unsatisfactory results. Given that the information on both sides arise from orally transmitted material based on vague memories, close matching of specific details would not be meaningful. It is more useful to look at the overall development of storylines and the thinking behind the stories.

For example the Chinese story from a footnote in Liezi,

"there is the story, Counselor Yi's mother lived by the Yi River; she was carrying him, and dreamed of a fairy warning her 'when water appears on the mortar, run eastwards and not look back' Next day she saw water on the mortar, told her neighbour and ran east; after some kilometres she looked back and saw the village covered in water; she turned into an mulberry tree"

which sounds like the story of Lot escaping the burning city, with his wife looking back and turning into a salt pillar. Similar stories are known in Korea and Japan, and many different versions exist in various parts of China, showing that this is a very old story that underwent extensive retelling and changing. However, if one tries to identify Lot with Counselor Yi's father, the result is unlikely to make sense.

Some rather obvious similarities between east and west

1. God made humans from soil, which symbolizes the importance attached to soil by agricultural societies, with humans coming from soil and returning to soil after death by burial.
2. Brother-sister incest: Fuxi and Nuwa were brother and sister, while Eve came from Adam's rib, meaning that they were related by flesh and blood; in other words, the original sin was incest. (Nuwa sounds close to E-ve on the one hand, and to No-ah on the other hand; the mother of Shun was Wo-deng and mother of Shennong An-deng, both possibly related to Adam)
3. Flood destroying the world but a couple recreated mankind; in fact the Greek flood story has the couple throwing stones on a riverbank to quickly produce new humans, whereas in the Chinese version, Nuwa used a piece of ivy to flick drops of mud which turned into humans.
4. Snake worship: In Genesis God condemned the serpent to crawl on its belly for tempting humans to sin; the question is how did it move before that? Fuxi and Nuwa are able to stand with their tails coiled together, showing that the ancient Chinese tribe worshipped the cobra; the ancient Hebrews would also have

worshipped cobras, but later moved to regions where no cobras lived and adopted new forms of worship, leaving just a vague memory that serpents could stand before but no longer did, and it was due to its tempting people to have sex. The original location, where the Chinese and Hebrews both started, was presumably India, from which Eden may have been derived. Adding to these similar legends from east and west, we also have a Tibetan legend that parallels the story of Solomon, another that has both a Chinese equivalent and a Greek equivalent, about using an ant to pull a string through a small hole (in a sea shell for Greek version, a piece of jade for Tibetan, and a long pearl for Chinese). There is also a Chinese story of a man chasing the sun, getting too close and dying of thirst, which parallels the story of Icarus. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that these were all part and parcel of the shared cultural heritage, with the most prominent part being compass-triangle or round heaven-square earth.



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