

ORIGINS OF SINISM

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THROUGH the preceding chapters there has run, perhaps to the point of monotony, the reiteration that the Chinese world-view is a peculiar socio-intellectual complex, not properly to be understood by piecemeal equation with any other. This fact is far from having won universal recognition.

That the history of thought is inseparable from the history of terminology is a proposition so patent that it does not require the support of the elaborate case which could be made out for it. Suffice it to say that a gap in terminology is beyond doubt one of the prime reasons for the existence of this conceptual lacuna. To fill this need it is proposed, at least for purposes of this study, to coin the word "Sinism."⁸⁴

The pattern on which the word is formed is, of course, that of "Hinduism." Because of the existence of this word, everyone recognizes that there is a typical Indian (since Hinduism has pervaded India) world-view. Hinduism is the complex pattern of concept and custom which limits, in a very general but very definite way, the thought and action of every Hindu. Sinism is a complex pattern of concept and custom which limits, in a very general but very definite way, the thought and action of every Chinese.

Both of these formulas must be modified in the case of foreign intrusions, but even here the parallel holds. The action of Hinduism,

⁸⁴ Two reasons, among others, may be assigned for the lack of a term to designate what I call "Sinism." The first is the textual interest which dominated early workers in the Chinese field. Thus, since Confucius edited the texts of Sinism, and since he and his disciples originated several of them, what more natural than to call it "Confucianism"? The second is the fact that this same pre-occupation, combined with their desire to find primitive monotheism in China, made it impossible for them to see the common socio-intellectual background out of which "Confucianism," "Taoism," and the popular religion evolved.

in assimilating Islam and Christianity more and more to its pattern, is in many ways reminiscent of the very large degree to which Sinism has assimilated Buddhism to itself. Incidentally, this latter case illustrates the need of the proposed term very well. It is said that Chinese Buddhism has appropriated many elements of Confucianism and of Taoism to itself. Yet many of these, as for instance the "Five Relations," antedate both Confucius and Lao Tse by centuries if not by millenia. They are, as a matter of fact, ancient elements of Sinism, within the stream of which Confucius and Lao Tse (the latter much more than the former) figure as initiators of special emphases.

The analogy with Hinduism may fruitfully be carried a little farther. Within the stream of Hinduism we find arising, from time to time, innovators who seem, at first glance, to be utter rebels against the old order, insisting on breaking the dykes of tradition, both in thought and in action, and carving out new paths for themselves. Gautama is a conspicuous Indian example. For a time they and their followers seem actually at war with orthodoxy, and they conceive their position to be absolutely opposed to all that has gone before. Yet a careful examination shows that they have, after all, drawn the materials of their thinking from the source of orthodoxy. Something they have added, something they have rejected; but the points in which they differ from the past are as nothing compared with the points of resemblance. The landscape over which the flood-waters boil is after all, very similar to that from which the main stream has been collected; and gradually the lay of the land drains all back into the parent river. It is a little deepened, a little broader, for the swelling of its current, but as it nears the sea never a ripple betrays the erstwhile deadly enmity of these waters, now inextricably mingled. So, in India, Buddhism becomes, about the tenth century A. D., an organic part of Hinduism.

Such also is the story of Taoism (which I shall call "Laoism") in China. Taking almost all of its materials from old Sinism, it is for a time the bitter enemy of orthodoxy, and later not only becomes itself orthodox but is completely assimilated to the Chinese world-view. Here again the term "Sinism" proves useful, for while it is not correct to say that Taoism was entirely absorbed by Confucianism, it is correct not only to say that Taoism became entirely assimilated to Sinism, but also that, in a larger sense, it

never ceased to be a part of Sinism at all, but was merely a special stress within it.

For the economy of labor it would be well if we could stop content merely to have proposed the addition of a useful word to the vocabulary of sinology. But if we go thus far, logic pushes us farther. If these further steps led into greater confusion, this would be a legitimate cause for considering retreat. It is believed, however, that they lie in the direction of greater clarity.

First, as regards "Confucianism." This has always been a somewhat awkward term, which often had to be used with the apologetic explanation that what it described did not really spring, logically or historically, from Confucius. One is often in some doubt as to whether it is used, in a specific context, to denote the general Chinese world-view, or to denote the particular discipline of the post-Confucian "literati" (*ju* 儒), one of whose most prominent characteristics was their veneration, almost amounting to a cult, of the "Confucian" *Classics*. If one extend the term, as it has been extended, to cover the former, he finds himself in the difficult position of affirming that Lao Tse, a *senior* contemporary of Confucius, took the fundamentals of his thinking from Confucianism, which he so greatly ridiculed.⁸⁵

We shall confine the term "Confucianism," therefore, to denote the discipline of the post-Confucian *ju* based on the Confucian edition of the *Classics*.⁸⁶ The older material is covered by the term Sinism, which of course includes Confucianism as an integral part.

It might be urged that this leaves Confucius in the doubtful position of not having been a very good Confucianist. But al-Asheri, in Islam, was not Asherite, either, although his disciples were. Jesus was not a Christian in the Pauline, Roman Catholic, or Evangelical Protestant sense. Indeed, this condition might be urged to be more usual than its reverse.

There remain two avenues not yet considered through which it might be maintained that what is here called Sinism is in reality Confucianism. These are two methods of establishing the position that this world-view was actually the invention of Confucius, rather than a heritage from a previous age. The first method of justifying this contention would be to allege that the classics, espe-

⁸⁵ I am assuming here, of course, that Lao Tse took the the fundamentals of his system from Sinism. I shall prove this proposition in a later chapter.

⁸⁶ The more popular *Confucian cult* is, of course, already adequately and properly so designated.

cially the *Shu King* and the *Shi King*, were written *in toto*, or at least drastically rewritten, by Confucius himself, rather than merely selectively edited. The second method would be to allege that this rewriting of the classics, in which they were saturated with the philosophy of Sinism, took place after the burning of the books, when they were, according to tradition, reconstituted from memory. It might plausibly be argued that the *ju* who did this work of reconstruction were so thoroughly impregnated with the philosophy of Confucius that they would unconsciously have read this into their manuscripts.

But it must be remembered that the Sinism in the *Classics* can not be accounted for by any introduction of a few characters or even of a great many paragraphs. This philosophical background is as integral to the *Shu* and to most of the *Shi* as is its wool to a fabric. Remove it from the *Shu* and you leave a record as threadbare as is Confucius' own *Ch'un Ch'in* without commentary (which incidentally does not reveal the sage as a very prolix author).

Confucius' own testimony is on the first point explicit.

The Master said, "A transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients, I venture to compare myself with our old P'ang."⁸⁷

The Master said, "I am not one who was born in the possession of knowledge; I am one who is fond of antiquity, and earnest in seeking it *there*."⁸⁸

The history of pseudepigraphy may well cause us to hesitate to accept this testimony unsupported. But Confucius' disciples do not claim originality for him either,⁸⁹ nor do his enemies accuse him of forgery in his own time.

Finally, we may cite the fact that in the time of Confucius and within a few centuries following we have abundant evidence of a civilization *embodying* Sinism. One man may, in a brief time, completely rewrite a document. No one man can completely and permanently alter a civilization.

Concerning the second proposition, that Sinism might have been written into the *Classics* after the burning of the books, it is sufficient to point out that at least the *Shu* must, then, have been written *de novo* at that time. But the *Shu King* is one of the great books of the world's literature, and its forgery under such circum-

⁸⁷ Analects (noted hereafter as *An.*) 6, 1.

⁸⁸ *An.* 7, 19.

⁸⁹ *An.* 19, 22; 7, 17.

stances would have been indeed a magnificent labor. It is equally difficult to believe that it could have been done or have succeeded. Further, it stands in harmony with the *Yi King*, which according to tradition was never burned.

Such is the case for the institution of the term "Sinism," and the restriction of the use of "Confucianism." What of "Taoism?"

"Taoism" (more strictly "Philosophic Taoism," to distinguish it from the later popular religion) is the term used to designate that philosophy, to be described in a later chapter, the peculiar characteristics of which were originated (or, at least, transmitted) by Lao Tse.

The older sinology showed a marked tendency to consider the Taoism of Lao Tse as an insert into Chinese thought, rather than an evolution out of it. This was done both by neglecting his connections with previous Sinism and by overlooking very considerable similarities of his thinking with that of his supposedly antithetic contemporary, Confucius. Both Granet and Wilhelm, writing recently, recognize that the philosophic concept which Lao-tse represented by *tao* takes most of its elements from Chinese antiquity.⁹⁰

In no work which I have examined, however, is there mention of a fact which would seem to be of prime importance, namely, that not only the idea but the very character *tao* 道 is almost as integral a part of Sinism in general as of the system of Lao Tse.

The character *tao* is used in the *Shu* a total of thirty-three (33) times, in twenty-six (26) of which cases it is used as a philosophical concept. Lao-tse's *tao* is an *extension* of this concept, but by no means an innovation.⁹¹ This fact is even more striking when we consider that the same idea occurs almost on every page of the *Shu*, denoted by other characters, often by *ti* 迪, which is similar in form and, in the context, very often identical in meaning with *tao* as a philosophical concept.⁹²

In the Confucian *Analects*, the occurrence of the character and the idea is even more striking. Confucius refers to the *tao* as a philosophical concept, in the *Analects*, no less than fifty-three (53)

⁹⁰ Richard Wilhelm, *Lao-tse und der Taoismus*.

⁹¹ The following references to Legge's translation of the *Shu*, in the *Chinese Classics*, show its occurrence as a philosophical concept: pp. 55, 61, 64, 65, 159, 183, 186, 210, 211 (twice), 250, 254, 261, 312, 331 (twice), 332, 349 (twice), 477, 527, 567, 572, 575, 576, 577. In other meanings it is used on pp. 99, 102, 112, 119, 345, 388, 558.

⁹² Watters, in his *Essays on the Chinese Language*, p. 154, says that *tao* is "nearly or quite synonymous with *ti*."

times, which is very remarkable when one considers the brevity of the book and the small amount of direct quotation of the Sage. In quotations from others, the character 道 is used, philosophically, twelve (12) times in the *Analects*.⁹³

The character *tao* 道 is composed of 走 meaning "to go" and 首, "chief," "leader." It is often used in the classics for "road." In the *Tribute of Yu* (one of the earlier books of the *Shu King*) it is used four times to denote the "channel" of a river. It seems fairly clear that the generally understood meaning of the "way" or the "path" is acceptable as its metaphorical philosophical meaning. It is often used to denote the manner of conduct of an individual; there may be a bad *tao* as well as a good *tao*, even a better and a worse *tao*. So far it is evident that we are dealing with a word which is fairly free from moral or metaphysical connotations, since these must be supplied by adjectives.

But the character *tao*, standing alone, came to have a richness of connotation rivalled by few words in any language. It came to be, in itself, the very epitome, the heart, soul, and symbol of Sinism. In this connotation it was used alike by Confucius and by Lao Tse, and it acquired this connotation centuries before the birth of the philosopher whose system has been labelled "Taoism."

In the *Counsels of the Great Yu*, the third document of the *Shu King*, traditionally ascribed to the latter half of the twenty-third century B. C.,⁹⁴ occurs the following passage:

Do not violate the *tao* to obtain the praise of the people.⁹⁵

Already *the tao* is a definite, specific concept. Of all possible ways of action, and of cosmic activity, there is *one* way which is above all others. Later, Mencius says, "Prince, do you doubt my words? The *tao* is one, and only one!"⁹⁶

Precisely here is the very nerve center of Sinism. The *Shu*

⁹³ Following are the passages in which Confucius uses the character *tao* in its philosophical sense in the *Analects*: 3,16; 4,4 (twice); 4,8; 4,15,1; 5,1,2; 5,6; 5,15; 5,20 (twice); 6,15; 6,22; 7,6,1; 8,13,1; 8,13,2 (twice); 8,13,3 (twice); 9,29 (twice); 11,23,3; 12,19 (twice); 13,25 (twice); 14,1 (twice); 14,4 (twice); 14,20,1; 14,30,2; 14,38,2 (twice); 15,6,1 (twice); 15, 6,2 (twice); 15,28 (twice); 15,31 (twice); 15,39; 16,2,1 (twice); 16,2,2; 16,2,3; 16,5; 16,11,2; 17,4,3; 18,5,4; 18,7,5. In other senses he uses it eleven times. *Tao* is used in its philosophical sense by others than Confucius in the following *Analects* passages: 1,2,2; 1,12,1; 3,24; 4,15,2; 5,12; 6,10; 19,2; 19,7; 19,12,2 (twice); 19,19; 19,22,2. They use it in other senses a total of eight times.

⁹⁴ My case does not, of course, rest on any claim of such antiquity for the document, but only on its antedating Lao Tse considerably.

⁹⁵ *Shu* p. 55.

⁹⁶ *Mencius* (hereafter cited as *Men.*), 3,1,1,3.

says, "To revere and honor the *tao* is the way ever to preserve the decree (or favor) of Heaven."⁹⁷ To this Lao Tse and Confucius would have joined in a fervent "amen." There *was* a way, the right way, and the only way, for the affairs of the cosmos to be carried on. This idea was a development of the concept of order, regularity, and harmony, ideally prevailing in the social as in the natural world, whose origin we have already traced. In one way or another, these Chinese were confident, they had come into the possession of the formula of the universe, a sovereign prescription of which only an adequate dose was needed to right all of the ills of the world in a twinkling. Thus, the theory of "majestic isolation." If they possessed the proper theory for running a state, why should they allow foreigners to come in with different (and *ipso facto* false) ideas and bother the smooth functioning of things?

Confucius is a confirmed Taoist.⁹⁸ According to Confucius, a great minister is one who serves his prince according to the *tao*.⁹⁸ The superior man (the ideal which Confucius was continually preaching) does not, according to him, worry concerning food, comfort, or personal success; his sole concern is that he may find the *tao*, and hold fast to it.¹⁰⁰ Confucius' oft-repeated formula for a state in which good government prevails and in which things are as they should be is that it "possesses the *tao*"; a state in which things are not as they should be "lacks the *tao*."¹⁰¹

The *tao* pervades the texts of Confucianism. The case of the *Analects* has been presented. The *Great Learning* opens with the words, "The *tao* taught by *The Great Learning* is . . ." The *Doctrine of the Mean* is built about the idea, and uses the character on almost every page. Mencius, as has been said, uses the character frequently and builds his theories, patterned on Confucius, around the concept.

Close investigation will reveal that the concept of the *tao*, as we find it, for instance, in Confucius, closer to the old Sinism, contains two elements (a third element, added by Lao Tse, will be discussed later). The first and more important of these two elements is the conception of an ideal and universal order, harmony, and

⁹⁷ *Shu* p. 183.

⁹⁸ Not, of course, in the traditional sense, but in that he uses the character and the idea constantly.

⁹⁹ *An.* 11,23,3.

¹⁰⁰ *An.* 15,31.

¹⁰¹ *An.* 14, 4, etc., etc.

perfection, social and cosmic, which had once existed and which, it might fervently be hoped, could be brought to exist again. This, the universal or cosmic *tao*, is an idea common and fundamental to both Confucius and Lao Tse. We have seen the origin and development of this idea in its social background. It is because this idea is thoroughly Chinese in origin, and because it is the very *sine qua non* of the philosophies of Confucius and Lao Tse alike, that they are classed together as preachers of Sinism.

But there is a second meaning inherent in *tao*, namely, the *way* in which the prevalence of the *tao* in the present social world is to be brought about. This latter is not a metaphysical concept, but a matter of technique and discipline. Here it is that Lao Tse and Confucius part company. Confucius probably had this in mind when he said, "Those whose *tao* is different can not lay plans for one another." Of course, in practice each school identified its own discipline with *the* (cosmic) *tao*.

The foregoing presentation, if successful, has established two points: Lao Tse was one of the preachers, philosophers, teachers, of Sinism, to which he gave a very special and peculiar emphasis. He did not originate the philosophical concept of the *tao*, which far antedated him, nor were he and his disciples by any means alone in using it in their own day.

Lao Tse did not originate Taoism. To call his system or his school by that name is confusing and misleading. He did (if our records be at all trustworthy) originate a very unusual and peculiar emphasis within Sinism, which served to attract to him a group of particularly keen-minded disciples, who kept his thought and his system alive long after his death. Lao Tse's peculiar contribution to Sinism should be called by his name, and would be most properly, most clearly, and most serviceably so designated. Henceforth in this study, therefore, what has traditionally been known to sinology by the name of Taoism will be called "Laoism."

A further justification for this term is found in the fact that, while Sinism was in existence before Confucius and would beyond doubt have persisted in some form had he never lived, Laoism is a form of Sinism so special and so different from what had gone before that we can hardly think that it would have come into being without the personality of Lao Tse to originate or to mediate it.¹⁰²

¹⁰² This last phrase leaves room for possible (though I think improbable) influence on Lao Tse from India, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Sinism, at its full development, is one of the most interesting systems of social theory and practice to be found anywhere in world history. Many systems have resembled it, in one way or another, but nowhere else, to the writer's knowledge, has the mind of man dared rise to the supreme audacity of envisaging the whole of mankind, nay of the universe, as a single, harmonious, cooperating whole, *every* part of which properly and ideally worked toward a common end of the welfare of all. Even in the sublimest reaches of the Christian dream there remained the "evil," to be overcome indeed, but to exist still, though impotent. But in Sinism there is no conception of evil as substance, but only as disharmony, which becomes good as soon as proper relationships are restored. It is in the Roman Catholicism of the middle ages that we get the nearest approach, in this respect, to Sinism. There, in the actual theory of the Church, if not in its avowed theory, the Pope is finally supreme on earth, the head of all things religious, the arbiter of all things political, the director of the educational system, the Father (in the sense of patriarchal authority) of all men. So it is to an even greater degree with the "Emperor of All Under Heaven."

Since the emperor is beyond all doubt the head and the keystone of Sinism, the system can not, in its full development, antedate the existence of an emperor. And since the emperor as an institution seems beyond question to be a development from the feudal system, a thorough investigation of the origins of Sinism must be pushed back to the origins of Chinese feudalism. At this point we meet something very close to an impasse.

Chinese feudalism is a datum, given in our earliest trustworthy records of Chinese history. The earliest specimens of Chinese writing of which I am aware are feudal records. Indeed, the very impulses leading to the most ancient compositions seem dependent on feudalism. Little use, then, to look to the literature for contemporary evidence of the origins of feudalism. At present the subject is obscure. The best one can do is to present the more plausible theories, leaving selection to be the result of future research.

The theories seem to group themselves into three classes, according to whether they propose feudalism to have sprung from a ruling group or caste, from ancient brotherhoods, or from military necessity.

The theory of an early aristocratic group is one which, on the surface of the evidence, recommends itself most strongly. Maspero tells us:

La société chinoise, telle qu'elle apparaît à l'époque des Tcheou, était divisée en deux classes distinctes: en bas la plèbe paysanne, en haut la classe patricienne, les nobles *che*. Les principes d'organisation de chacune des deux classes étaient absolument opposés: dans l'une une sorte de grégairisme, une vie en groupes, en communautés où individus et familles doivent se perdre et ne comptent pas; dans l'autre, au contraire, une sorte d'individualisme familial. Les nobles étaient libres de leur personne, dans les limites de leurs devoirs et leur parents; les paysans étaient tenus dans les liens étroits d'une organisation méticuleuse qui ne leur laissait aucune initiative. Les patriciens avaient un nom de clan, des ancêtres, un culte familial, ils pouvaient posséder des fiefs, recevoir des charges officielles; les plébéiens n'avaient rien de tout cela, ils ne pouvaient jamais posséder la terre. Jusque dans les règles morales de la vie, la différence se retrouvait; les patriciens pratiquait les rites, *yi-li*, les plébéiens n'avaient que des coutumes, *sou*: "les rites ne descendent pas jusqu'aux gens du commun."¹⁰³

The noble was a city-dweller, the peasant, of course, never. As in feudal Europe, one class of non-nobles, the artisans, was attached to the urban scheme.

The gulf between noble and peasant is, as Granet points out in the introduction to his *Danses et Legendes*, far-reaching. For example, the number six is associated with the noble scheme, five with the common. All of these considerations produce a strong predisposition to regard the feudal class as being in some way an original caste, such as would be the result of conquest by an outside group.¹⁰⁴ Yet, if we consider the matter for a moment from its *a priori* aspect alone, we must realize that the facts do not preclude any other explanation.

At the height of the development of feudalism in medieval France and Germany we are presented with a picture of human society in which stratification has reached, probably, an extreme as great as any to be found in human history. A serf was considered hardly human. Contemporary accounts tell us that he was a dirty,

¹⁰³ Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 107-8

¹⁰⁴ The Norman conquest of England and its effect on English nobility provides a neat analogy.

evil, misshapen brute, fit for nothing but hard-driven work in the fields. He stank so vilely that lords and ladies (none too dainty themselves in those days) could not bear to be in his vicinity. Yet what was the origin of this situation? We have here no difference of race, nor even any ancient difference of caste. We know that a few centuries earlier the barbarians, from whom lords and serfs alike were recently descended, made it their proudest boast that all were free and all were equal, and that no chief, even, was strong enough to coerce the sovereign will of one of his followers.

The human mind is very quick to adapt itself to an unchallenged *status quo*, and to believe that what is is what has always been. In the United States there is many an aristocracy, based on the wealth of the grandfathers of its members, whose chief claim to glory is that its ranks are forever closed to the merely wealthy. We may not then assume that the mere existence of a Chinese aristocracy in a thoroughly entrenched position necessarily proves for it any great antiquity. Indeed, this argument may be partially reversed. The Chinese, like any good aristocracy, depends on ancestors.¹⁰⁵ People who need ancestors, like people who need anything else badly enough, usually find them. We cannot, therefore, allow ourselves to be led astray by mere genealogies going back to very early times. The effect of ancestor-manufacturing on Chinese historical records has been profound, and cannot yet be accurately gauged. Granet has pointed out that the traditions relating to the ancestral founders of the Yin and the Chow dynasties are so nearly identical that one has certainly been modeled on the other, perhaps the former after the plan of the latter.¹⁰⁶ If this were true, it would mean that the history of the founding of the Yin dynasty was written, almost from the whole cloth, half a millenium after the event. This is an indication of the extreme caution to be used in handling Chinese records dealing with antiquity.

The theory of a ruling caste is strongly advocated by Dr. Tai, who pictures it as a conquering group. He is by no means alone in this position, which as we have seen makes a great appeal. The first difficulty with it is that, like all the other theories, it lacks any considerable body of real historical evidence. Furthermore, close investigation of its claims reveals certain fundamental weaknesses. According to Granet, who is a careful student of the facts,

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁶ *Danses*, p. 398.

“Rien ne permet de découvrir. . . des espèces de castes ethniques antagonistes.”¹⁰⁷ Ethnic diversity in China, he points out, is everywhere admitted, but any evidence to show an ethnic duality, or to link the variations of custom to such a dual system is wanting.

Furthermore, Chinese history is full of episodes in which men are raised from the humble position of following the plow or the like, to that of directing the state. When this is merely the elevation to the position of minister the case for caste distinctions may be kept up, but when, as in the case of Shun, a commoner is made emperor, maintenance of the theory is difficult.

The emperor said, “Oh! you *chief of the four mountains*, I have been on the throne for seventy years. You can carry out my appointments;—I will resign my throne to you.” His Eminence said, “I have not the virtue; I should *only* disgrace the imperial seat.” The emperor said, “Point out some one among the illustrious, or set forth one from among the poor and mean.” All *in the court* said to the emperor, “There is an unmarried man among the lower people, called Shun of Yu.” The emperor said, “Yes, I have heard of him. What is his character?” His Eminence said, “He is the son of a blind man. His father was obstinately unprincipled; his *step*-mother was insincere; his *half-brother* Seang was arrogant. He has been able, however, by his filial piety to live in harmony with them, and to lead them gradually to self-government, so that they no longer proceed to great wickedness.” The emperor said, “I will try him! I will wive him, and then see his behaviour with my two daughters.” On this he gave orders, and sent down his two daughters to the north of Kwei, to be wives in the family of Yu. The emperor said to them, “Be reverent!”¹⁰⁸

In due time Shun succeeded Yao. His humble origin is very far from tarnishing the glory of his memory. Throughout the classical period, the highest praise which can be bestowed on an emperor is to compare his reign to those of “Yao and Shun.”

The passage just cited concludes the first document of the *Shu King*. Its historicity is, of course, most doubtful, but its historical importance may not be questioned. For it means that, well before the time of Confucius, the ruling class was willing to admit such an origin for one of the most ancient and most venerated of em-

¹⁰⁷ *Danses*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Shu* p. 26-7.

perors. It means, also, that if the Chinese feudality did originate as a caste, then that caste, which doted on records and genealogies, must not only have forgotten its origin and even its very existence, but must have lost its very impulse to exclusiveness. All of this seems doubtful.¹⁰⁹

After the theory that Chinese feudalism finds its origin in a conquering ruling group, differing ethnically from the mass of the people, we may certainly write "not proven" in large letters.

A second approach to the establishment of the early existence of a ruling group is quite as attractive and perhaps more tenable. According to this theory the aristocracy was not ethnically different from the peasantry, but was composed of the descendants of the leaders of nomadic groups which settled China at an early period. Such bands necessarily have some leadership, and such control often becomes localized in certain families. In a settled agricultural condition such families may easily develop into a settled ruling group, without in any way negating or even forgetting the common origin of the whole people. Such a condition is, in fact, what we have in India, in the history of the *Kshatriya* caste. In the late Vedic period, when caste had not yet become rigidly formalised, we have a condition in many ways similar to the Chinese.

This gives, also, a plausible explanation for a phenomenon of the religion which was noted in Chapter I, namely, that it appears that in ancient times the cultus of the peasants was concerned chiefly with the *shê* and the affairs of agriculture, while the aristocratic cult seems from the first to have been attached to Heaven, *T'ien*. The common people, settling down to an agricultural life, would naturally have had their interests quickly assimilated to the new situation. The rulers, on the other hand, would tend to be more conservative, holding to the sky-power which is perhaps the most usual of nomadic deities and which, in China, appears always to have been the sanction of governmental authority.

The hypothesis is so plausible as to be almost irresistible, if—we possessed any real evidence of a previous nomadic state of the Chinese, or even of any very considerable migration which they would have had to make to the present China. But this is, as we have already seen, quite lacking. A comparison of the historical

¹⁰⁹ I am aware that Shun's origin is referred to the rulers of the principality of Yu, somehow reduced in circumstances in Shun's generation. This is only to be expected. But I believe that the text of the *Shu* and the opinion of Mencius (4.2.1.1) give sufficient support to my position.

ethnology of Europe and America will serve to make out a case, of some plausibility, for the origin of man, as such, in Asia, and in precisely what part of Asia one can not say. The Chinese may well have arrived at their present situation, after no very long journey, in small groups entirely lacking any real leadership. This whole question is in a state of suspension, and while it is so no theory of Chinese feudalism which bases its origin on the assumption of an early nomadic stage or a wholesale migration can be accepted without reserve.

Granet's two-volume work, *Danses et Legendes de la Chine Ancienne*, is devoted largely to the development of his "brotherhood" theory of the origin of Chinese feudalism. It is a complicated and ingenious hypothesis, which impresses the reader either as a wild flight of fancy or as a most profound analysis, according to whether or not he agrees with its author. In either case, it is undeniable that Granet's searching investigation of the sources has contributed information of the highest importance to the ultimate solution of the problem. It is impossible to do more than sketch Granet's hypothesis here.

The heart of his scheme is that "Les chefs, semble-t-il, furent d'abord des chefs de confrérie." These brotherhoods were essentially religious organizations, possessing certain religious symbols, totems, dances and ceremonies. This ritual was enacted chiefly, Granet believes, during the winter time, the season when the men were not busy in the fields.

Celui-la devient un Chef qui, riche de talents religieux et techniques, possède des danses, des chants, des légendes, des emblèmes, des talismans, des bijoux et, créant une clientèle en faisant circuler ce patrimoine, semble le dépenser, mais en accroît le prestige,—et reste maître, quand le moment est bon, de le convertir en valeurs qui, si elles semblent d'ordre matériel, gardent encore toute l'efficacité symboliques des valeurs premières.¹¹⁰

The chief was able to appropriate to himself the prestige and properties of the Sacred Place. This was done either by means of the sacrifice of the founding ancestor of the noble line, or of his chief follower, on the spot.¹¹¹

This whole complex reminds one most insistently of the social

¹¹⁰ Granet, *Danses*, p. 588.

¹¹¹ Granet, *Danses*, p. 44, p. 296, p. 402i.

organization of the American Indians of the Northwest Coast area, whose life is so pervaded by the potlatch idea (which Granet mentions often) that they have been said to have a "potlatch psychology." This might be another and striking evidence that the American race derives from Asia and is related to the Chinese.¹¹² However, the separation in time and space is so great that only a very exhaustive study of all the intervening peoples, and of minute details of each complex, could serve to show psychological relationship. Certainly, the Indians of the Northwest Coast prove that the situation which Granet pictures is not impossible.

A thorough evaluation of Granet's contribution is beyond the scope of this study.

The various theories for the origin of Chinese feudalism are by no means mutually exclusive. Another factor may well, and indeed must, have been operative alongside of any other. That factor is military necessity. The history of the Chinese is that of a peaceful, civilized, agricultural people, inhabiting a particularly fertile and favorable section of Asia, in which they were surrounded on three sides by peoples of somewhat less culture and on the whole warlike disposition. There have been constant incursions of these peoples into the "Middle States," which have resulted in the fact that from time to time a "barbarian" has occupied the throne of the Son of Heaven. It is perfectly obvious that, in such a situation, some kind of provision for military protection was inevitable. Whether or not a conquering people settled down as a ruling caste in China, whether or not a system of religion and ritual resulted in a complex organization of societies whose heads became feudal lords, a military class might be expected to have arisen in China, from the very logic of the situation. And once this class had arisen, there is no question but it would certainly, on the one hand, have developed many of the earmarks of an exclusive class, and on the other hand it would beyond doubt have accumulated for itself certain symbols, rituals, and religious sanctions.¹¹³

Once more a glimpse at European feudalism is enlightening. The "Chanson de Roland," the Arthurian cycle, the ritual of knighthood and of the tournament, rich traditions of feudal fam-

¹¹² The announcement of Professor Sapir, that he has found a relationship to exist between certain Athapascan languages and certain old Sinitic stocks serves to lend additional color to this general proposition.

¹¹³ Even in a country so aggressively democratic as the United States of America, army officers as a group show many of the characteristics of a caste.

ilies, etc., form a background against which one might, with judicious use of the allegorical method, build a formidable hypothesis of an origin like that which Granet gives for the Chinese feudality. Yet, as opposed to this, we know that the fact is that European feudalism came into being largely because not every Frankish farmer could afford a horse and all the accompanying trappings which war with the Saracens made necessary. For this reason, those who were to fight had to be subsidized by the others who stayed at home and looked after their farms. With this subsidy went blue blood and the divine appointment as supermen.

Obscure as is the origin of Chinese feudalism, the origin of the Chinese empire is as much so. As has just been said, although we do not have any trustworthy evidence as to the precise manner of the origin of feudalism, we have no difficulty in conceiving that it must in some manner have come into being. The existence of such an ancient empire as the Chinese, and of such relative stability, is, however, hardly what we would expect. Was it the outgrowth of some vaguely recognized chieftainship over a migrating horde? This would be an attractive theory, if we knew that there had been a migration.

The *Shu King* opens as follows:

Examining into antiquity, *we find that* the emperor Yaou was called Fang-heun. He was reverent, intelligent, accomplished, and thoughtful,—naturally and without effort. He was sincerely courteous, and capable of *all* complaisance. The display of *these qualities* reached to the four extremities of *the empire*, and extended from earth to heaven. He was able to make the able and virtuous distinguished, and thence proceeded to the love of the nine classes of his kindred, who all became harmonious. He *also* regulated and polished the people of *his domain*, who all became brightly intelligent. *Finally*, he united and harmonized the myriad states of *the empire*; and lo! the black-haired people were transformed. The result was *universal* concord.¹¹⁴

That which immediately follows this is pure mythology, and I should not wish to lay myself open to the accusation of taking any of this material literally. Nevertheless, it contains an account of the origin of the empire which is, on the whole, most acceptable.

¹¹⁴ *Shu* p. 15-17.

Precisely what we should expect is that some ruler of a petty state, possessed of an unusual degree of ability and prestige, should first consolidate his position at home and then proceed to the gradual conquest of the entire group of principalities. To hold them, and make of them a real empire, he would have been obliged, in the words of the text, to "harmonize" them.

Not only is this what we should logically expect to take place, but we are so fortunate as to have records, more or less accurate, which tell of the re-enactment of this very process several times in Chinese history. The rise of each successive dynasty is the story of a similar program, complicated, of course, by the necessity of removing the preceding house.

Whatever may have been the historical relation between the empire and the feudal system, there is no question that in historical times the feudal system was headed up (theoretically, if not always in terms of actual power) by the emperor. The system was very much like that of medieval Europe, each vassal being invested with his fief by his next superior, and the great feudatories receiving their charge from the emperor himself. The emperor had, always in theory and often in practice, the power of removing any vassal at will. He was himself amenable only to the will of Heaven. (The principle, *Vox populi, vox dei*, worked here, however, even more rigorously than elsewhere, as will be developed later).

In the last chapter attention was called to the "philosophical map" of China (see page 408), which contained two imaginary lines running NE-SW and NW-SE, dividing the country into four sections not unlike the quarters of a pie. At the intersection of these lines, the precise imaginary center of the empire, the emperor was located. His influence radiated in all directions, and was mediated by his vassals. This scheme was dramatized by the use of the five colors and the *shê* which have been mentioned before. At the imperial capital was located a mound, symbolizing the earth potency of the whole empire, playing for the larger unit the same rôle as did the *shê* for the village district. Here were made sacrifices for the empire as a whole, and here also was held the service of investing a newly created vassal with a fief. This mound was composed, according to the records, of earth of five colors, the north slope being white, the east green, etc., and the center, symbolizing the imperial power extending over the whole earth, yellow. Now,

when a vassal of royal blood was invested with a fief lying to the east, he was given a piece of earth, green in color, taken from the eastern side of the imperial mound. He, in turn, took this to his capital and embedded it in a similar mound which he built for himself, but which was all of one color (in this case, green).¹¹⁵ Precisely how old this interesting ceremony may be is difficult to say. Chavannes believes it probably existed before 1000 B. C.

There was a network of mounds, one at each capital, comprising a material symbol of the graded system of feudal power. But it appears at once that this mound is something different from the *shê* which has been described, for that was a symbol of fertility, of the agricultural bounty of the earth, while this mound is rather a symbol of territory possessed by a ruler. The earth to a peasant means fields, but to a prince it means power. The difficulty is cleared up when we find that there were *two* mounds existing side by side in the capitals, one of which typified the earth as agricultural potency, the other as territory. The latter, Chavannes tells us, was called the "Great" or the "Regional" mound, and was located directly opposite the ancestral temple of the ruler of the district. The other, associated with agriculture, was located in the field in which the ruler himself performed the ritual of cultivating the millet destined to be used in the sacrifices in the ancestral temple. The rulers were interested in agriculture, indirectly, almost as much as were the people.¹¹⁶

But territory alone does not constitute an aristocracy. An aristocrat must have ancestors, and he usually has an ancestral hall of one kind or another in which he preserves certain memorials of their greatness. The Chinese carried this process very far indeed. The ancestral temple is, to the present day, one of the essentials of a really great Chinese family. Here are kept the tablets representing, first, the great founder of the family, and after him, the tablets of six generations of ancestors reading back from the present. In the ancestral temple, honors of various kinds were preferred, and rewards bestowed, just as punishments were administered "in the presence of the *shê*." It seems also that divination, probably believed in some cases at least to have been communication with the ancestors, was carried on in the ancestral temple.

The possession of territory and ancestors made a feudal lord

¹¹⁵ Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai Chan*, p. 452-6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 447-8.

what he was. The territorial mound and the ancestral temple, facing each other, made a capital. These two necessities were the first matters to be attended to in founding a new capital.¹¹⁷ Here is the philosophical and religious essence of the feudal system.

En 515 av. J.-C. le sage *Ki Tseu*, du pays de *Wou*, dit: "Si les anciens princes ne sont pas privés de sacrifices en sorte que le peuple ne manque pas de gouvernement, et si les dieux du sol et des moissons recovient les offrandes prescrites en sorte que l'état ne soit pas ruiné, il est mon souverain (celui qui veille a cela)." Voila pourquoi le prince doit avant toute chose "presider aux dieux du sol et des moissons et s'occuper des sacrifices aux ancêtres." On pourrait relever dans le littérature chinoise d'innombrable passages où on verrait un souverain rapporter, comme le fit l'empereur *Wen* en 167 av. J.-C., la prospérité de son règne "à l'appuie surnaturel (*ling*) que lui a prêté le temple ancestral et au bonheur que lui ont envoyé les dieux du sol et des moissons."¹¹⁸

Furthermore, the wiping out of these two potencies was necessary if one were to completely eradicate the menacing influence of one's vanquished predecessor. In the case of the ancestral temple, this seems to have been accomplished by simple demolition. This accorded with the fact that the unfortunate ancestors of the displaced house would no longer continue to receive sacrifices and would soon cease to enjoy even the shadowy kind of immortality accorded to a Chinese noble. In the case of the mound, however, it seems to have been deemed impossible to destroy it completely. This feeling of awe, which forbade the breaking of it into pieces and carting it away, is perhaps another evidence of the antiquity of the cult of the *shê*. The measures taken with it were, first, to cut down the tree which grew on it, and then to build a roof over it so as to break its communication with the heavens. In this way its potency was destroyed.

Two further proofs are at hand to show that these two institutions were the very *sine qua non* of feudalism. As the ancestral temple contained tablets representing the ancestors, so it was customary to erect on the mound a stone column which symbolized its power.¹¹⁹ When a lord left his capital, he could not take his

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 515.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 476-78.

temple or his mound with him, yet he could not dispense with their support in such undertakings as war, etc. Therefore one of the ancestral tablets from the temple and the stone column from the *shê* were mounted on a special carriage, called the "car of purity" and taken along.¹²⁰

It is surely evident that the various factors which have been discussed since the beginning of this study are not merely rational consequents of the philosophical system described in Chapter II. The two pillars of feudalism are probably reminiscent of a period which knew little of philosophy¹²¹ yet they, as many other elements, have been harmonized to it. Thus, the *shê* and the ancestral temple stand opposite each other and dominate society as the *yin* and the *yang* oppose each other and generate the cosmos. The *shê* stands to the west, and represents *yin*, the temple stands to the east, its proper direction as the representative of the *yang*. Between these two stands the palace of the ruler, who is in himself the center of the universe, the harmonizer of Heaven and Earth, the regulator of all things.¹²² Seldom has a philosophy been worked out so prettily in the concrete.

The dynastic histories were likewise harmonized with the system of the five *hsing*, the five colors, and some of their other correlates.¹²³ Each dynasty had a color and an element corresponding to it. Thus it was red for the Chow (II, 312), white for the Yin (II, 312), yellow and earth for the Han (II, 291). Various omens, such as dragons, of the color proper to the dynasty, were eagerly expected, and believed to presage a prosperous reign. It should be noted that the succession of dynastic *hsing* is made to correspond to the succession in which the *hsing* triumph over one another

First the white fish was caught, afterwards the red crow, that meant to say that the sway of the Yin (white) was broken and their glory transferred upon the Chow. Prognosticating Wu Wang's¹²⁴ fate from the appearance of the fish and the crow, we see that the Chow were destined to obtain control of the empire. (II, 312)

Wên Wang received a scarlet bird, and Wu Wang, a white fish and a red crow (as omens). The scholars are of the

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 512.

¹²¹ *Cf. Ibid.*, p. 525.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 510-11.

¹²³ Granet, *Religion*, p. 119.

¹²⁴ First emperor of the Chow dynasty.

opinion that with the bird Heaven's decree was transmitted to Wên Wang, which in the case of Wu Wang was done by the fish and the crow. (I, 130).

Kung-Sun Ch'ên of Lu, under the regime of Hsiao Wên Ti, sent in a memorial to the effect that, the ruling element of the Han being earth, its correlate, a yellow dragon, ought to become visible. Subsequently a yellow dragon put in an appearance and became the style of a reign. (II, 291)¹²⁵

This color motif runs very consistently, and sometimes surprisingly, through the histories. Thus we find that King Wu, after defeating the last of the Yin emperors, decapitates him with a yellow ax (because yellow is the imperial color?), but when he comes to the task of killing the two female favorites of the king, he first strangles them and then decapitates them with a *black* ax, because, we are told, black is the color of the north, the *yin*, and therefore, feminine.¹²⁶

Precisely how much of this by-play is history and how much is commentary it is hard to say, but certainly this accepted theory of things must have played some rôle in a political scene so thoroughly dominated by popular psychology as was the Chinese during a considerable part of its history.

Yet another element of this complex tapestry is so important that it must be dealt with even in this rapid survey. *T'ien*, "Heaven," was referred to in Chapter I. It was suggested there that two origins of this concept are possible. On the one hand, it might be an idea retained from very ancient pastoral nomadic times, strengthened and brought into prominence, as the patron of government, with the rise of the feudal system, and, especially, of the empire. On the other hand, it might have originated as a vague sky-power, recognized by the agricultural Chinese as the source of rain and sunshine and the seat of a certain regulatory function, and have later undergone this same emphasis under the governmental stimulus. In any case, we do find that Heaven is the patron and even the arbiter of government, and that the former kings and their chief officers are vaguely conceived as maintaining a shadowy existence for some time in an upper region associated with the Heaven-power. Discussion of the precise function of Heaven in the government must be postponed a little, while we inquire into

¹²⁵ The style *huang-lung*, "Yellow Dragon," under the emperor Hsüan Ti, 49-48 B. C.

¹²⁶ Granet, *Danses*, p. 112.

the origin of another figure which occupies a similar, if not the identical, sphere.

This similar figure is that of *Shang Ti* 上帝. The latter character standing alone is regularly used to designate the earthly emperor, although it alone may also be used to stand for *Shang Ti* if the context is clear. The former character, *shang*, is very common, meaning "above, up, superior," etc. *Shang Ti*¹²⁷ then means "Superior Ruler," or "Emperor who is above." As a matter of fact he was believed, from an early period, to have his seat in the north polar star, and his ministers to have theirs in the stars of the Great Dipper.

T'ien and *Shang Ti* present, to the Westerner, a pretty puzzle in mixed identities. They have distinct attributes and associations, as will be shown, but they are now and then used synonymously by Chinese writers, apparently to avoid repetition. They are so used in the *Shi King*:¹²⁸

When *Shang Ti* decreed
They became subject to Chow.
They became subject to Chow;
The decree of *T'ien* is not constant.

It is almost as puzzling at times as is the Christian Trinity, yet the Chinese of the ancient period seldom if ever felt the need of rationalizing the confusion. They had not the Jewish taunt of polytheism which spurred the Church Fathers. Lu Shih wrote:

Ti is *T'ien*; *T'ien* is *Ti* . . . He is called Heaven, when we look from the point of his overshadowing the entire world; he is called sovereign, when we look from the point of his rulership.¹²⁹

Because of certain differences in characteristics between *T'ien* and *Shang Ti*, it has long been a widely accepted theory that one of them, and probably *Shang Ti*, originated as a deity of some people other than the ancient Chinese proper, and was taken over by them and eventually became fused with *T'ien*. Well authenticated cases of such fusion of deities are legion, so that there is no *a priori* diffi-

¹²⁷ I have referred to *T'ien* as "it" and now to *Shang Ti* as "he" because the former is, in general, conceived impersonally, the latter personally.

¹²⁸ *Shi King* (in *C.C.*) p. 430.

¹²⁹ Quoted by Quentin Kuei Yuan Huang, "The Life of Meh Ti" (*The Open Court*, vol. XLII, no. 863) p. 232, note.

culty in this. Dr. T'ai¹³⁰ has made an extensive study of the various theories, and believes that *Shang Ti* was taken over from the Miao-li people, a group which we know was incorporated into the composite Chinese race. He says:

We have no direct evidence to show that the Chinese got these two terms (*Shang Ti*) from the Miao people. So strictly speaking the conclusion we come to is at best a hypothesis. . . . The characteristics of *Shang-ti* indicate that the *Shang-ti* cult had an independent origin from the *T'ien*-worshippers group. From the few instances of the Chinese relations with the Miao people, I am inclined to believe that the latter's influence was very strong on the development of Chinese ancient culture and that they might have supplied the first Chinese immigrants with the concepts and terminology for the *Shang-ti cult*.¹³¹

T'ai believes that the Miao origin of the *Shang Ti* cult is strongly evidenced by the tradition that Huang Ti, the first Chinese ruler who brought the Miao tribes to complete submission, was also the first to build a temple to *Shang Ti*.¹³² He interprets this as having been perhaps a conciliatory gesture. Dr. T'ai concludes that his hypothesis, while not certain, is "very reasonable and probable." That it is reasonable, may be agreed, but it would be well to substitute "possible" for "probable."

The whole position rests on the contention that *Shang Ti* must have originated among a group other than that which first possessed *T'ien*. This in turn rests on certain differences in the two concepts. What were these differences?

T'ien was originally the sky, vaguely conceived as the regulator, first of the seasons and the weather, then of all socio-cosmic affairs.¹³³ In one passage Wang Ch'ung distinguishes between "blue *T'ien*" (the sky) and "*T'ien shên*" (the intelligence or activity of Heaven) but this is a phenomenon of late sophistication and even then not characteristic. All things, good and bad alike, are ultimately motivated by Heaven.¹³⁴

Shang Ti is a more specific figure.

The original conception of *T'ien* was very naïve while

¹³⁰ Cf. Kwen Ih T'ai, *op. cit.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹³³ Cf. Granet, *Religion*, p. 62.

¹³⁴ Cf. John Ross, *The Original Religion of China*, p. 131.

Shang-ti was conceived from the very beginning as a lofty lord with all the royal dignity and authority.¹³⁵

[*Shang Ti*] was an urban deity to be worshipped in a temple with cooked offerings, dancing and music.¹³⁶

Shang-ti was to be worshipped by the "Son of *T'ien*" alone, and his association was limited to the deceased ancestors of the ruling dynasty and the spirits of distinguished worthies.¹³⁷

With a lack of dogmatic finality equalling that of Dr. T'ai, I wish to present an hypothesis of my own. It seems that such a figure as *Shang Ti* probably would have arisen, with the appearance of the empire, in any case, as a *transcendentalization of the imperial office and function*. It is a truism among historians that the success of the monotheistic idea in the Roman world is traceable, very considerably, to the existence of the human emperor. In the light of this, nothing is more natural than that the first Chinese emperor who was able firmly to establish his power should be the first to celebrate the fact by raising a temple to *Shang Ti*.

From another point of view, according to this theory, *Shang Ti* appears as a personalization of the political function of *T'ien*. This process is equally common with that of the fusion of deities: the "Holy Ghost" is such a personalization of a function of *Jahweh*. In neither of these cases does the process infringe the basic unity of the original deity: the new name merely denotes an aspect of the old concept. We have, as it happens, a Chinese case of this of which we can be sure, that of the *shê* referred to above. With the rise of feudalism, the old agricultural *shê* had to take on a new function, that of representing the land as political territory; the result was the creation of two mounds, one for the prince, the other for agricultural purposes. So it is with Heaven. The old vague nature-power did not suffice to give the strong cosmic sanction which the new political system needed. What more natural, then, than that *Shang Ti* should be "conceived from the very beginning as a lofty lord with all the royal dignity and authority"?

Through history, the two aspects of the heaven-power remain in much this status. The "will of *T'ien*" is to be learned by consulting the wishes of the people, but *Shang Ti* is more closely allied to the aristocracy, and to its typical symbol, the ancestral temple. In

¹³⁵ T'ai, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

the *Doctrine of the Mean*, (one of the specifically Confucian Classics) we read:

By the ceremonies of the sacrifices to heaven and earth they served *Shang Ti* and by the ceremonies of the ancestral temple they sacrificed to their ancestors. He who understands the ceremonies of the sacrifice to heaven and earth, and the meaning of the several sacrifices to ancestors, would find the government of a kingdom as easy as to look into his hand.¹³⁸

It must be noted, however, that the attributes of *T'ien* and *Shang Ti*, while different, rarely if ever conflict. Thus, even *Shang Ti* does not practise favoritism, for he is limited by the impersonal justice of *T'ien*. "Heaven has no affections; only to those who are reverent does it show affection."¹³⁹

This completes our brief account of background from which Sinism developed. During the remainder of this entire study we shall treat of it as *fait accompli*.

* * *

It is desirable, for the sake of clarity, to set down certain minimal and definitive characteristics of Sinism as a philosophy. I should list them as follows:

First, the conviction that there exists a potential and pre-established pattern according to which all existent things ought to be arranged and regulated, that all things are good in their proper place, and that all deviation from this pattern is unnatural and the result of perversion. This is the belief in the *tao*.

Second, that the emperor is the center of all things on earth (including human and animal society), that he is the earthly viceroy of more than human power, and that it is only necessary for him to adjust perfectly to the *tao* in order to bring about earthly harmony; conversely all disorders on earth are caused, finally, by failure of the emperor to follow the *tao*. The sage has special knowledge of the *tao* and should be employed to advise the emperor.

Third, that in remote times the "Holy Emperors" of the "Golden Age" knew and followed the *tao* and it is therefore

¹³⁸ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 19,6.

¹³⁹ *Shu*, p. 207.

only necessary to learn and follow their formula in order to bring about universal felicity.¹⁴⁰

These principles are basic for Confucius and for Lao Tse as well.

Sinism, it must be remembered, was not a political, moral, religious, social, educational, or cosmic philosophy, but all of them as a unified complex. In this respect it represented the facts more nearly than does our Western tendency to artificial departmentalization.

As is not unusual in a feudal situation, the emperor, when strong, was concerned more closely with the people than with his vassals. This was, of course, a recognition of the fact that the people possessed the power to overturn the throne, but it was more than this, too.

The principle of the division of labor was explicitly recognized,¹⁴¹ with its corollary, that the prime function of the ruler, and the justification of his special privileges, was his care for the welfare of the people. Theoretically, Heaven supervised the process, and appointed the most able and most virtuous man in the empire, regardless of his former position, to be "Son of Heaven."¹⁴² Heaven also removed him when he ceased to act for the good of the people.¹⁴³

But this action of Heaven came about through the action of men. The crucial test was similar in principle to the "trial by combat" in medieval Europe. If an emperor did not bring about the welfare of the people, or if he seemed to forsake the ancient *tao*, one of his vassals simply announced that the decree of Heaven had been removed from the reigning house and was lodged in him, the rebel. The success or failure of his revolution, which hinged on the adherence of the people, was the test of his claims.

He who soothes us is our sovereign, he who oppresses us is our enemy.¹⁴⁴

Heaven sees and hears as our people see and hear.¹⁴⁵

This exalted view of the people, represented by the common

¹⁴⁰ This last principle is specifically set forth in the *Shu King*, p. 210. "To maintain the same *tao* as those who secured good government will surely lead to prosperity."

¹⁴¹ Cf. Mencius 3(1),4,6.

¹⁴² Cf. *Shu*, p. 24, p. 283; *Doctrine of the Mean*, 17,5; *Men*, 5,5,4.

¹⁴³ *Shu*, p. 186.

¹⁴⁴ *Shu*, p. 296. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 55-56, and Wieger, *Histoire des Croyances*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ *Shu*, p. 74.

saying "Consult the grass and firewood gatherers,"¹⁴⁶ runs throughout the materials in opposition to another common attitude, that of "dealing with the mass of the people as children."¹⁴⁷ Confucius himself alternates between these two attitudes. In the last analysis it is not, however, the people who are to be followed, but the *tao*. "Do not go against the *tao* to get the praise of the people."¹⁴⁸

It will be readily seen that the verdict of the *Shi*, "It is not easy to be king,"¹⁴⁹ was richly justified. The king was literally responsible for everything which occurred. Among the most tragic passages in the *Classics* are the laments of unfortunate rulers, who, in the midst of some such calamity as famine, know that they must have transgressed, yet are unable to discover how. King Seuen, despairing at the misery of his people suffering from drought, cries "Would that it fell (only) on me!"¹⁵⁰

The influence of the emperor on the people acts, to be sure, in what we should call "natural" ways. His is the duty of educating the people.¹⁵¹ Example is recognized as a powerful channel of his influence.¹⁵² But it is also indubitable that there is an element of what we Westerners should call the distinctly metaphysical in its operation.

The Master said, "When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed."¹⁵³

Mencius said, "If the sovereign be benevolent, all will be benevolent. If the sovereign be righteous, all will be righteous."¹⁵⁴

You (the Emperor) are the wind; the inferior people are the grass. [*I.e.*, when the wind blows, the grass *must* bend].¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁶ *Li Ki* (in *S.B.E.*), 501.

¹⁴⁷ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20.12.

¹⁴⁸ *Shu*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁹ *Shi King* (in *C.C.*), p. 432.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

¹⁵¹ *Li Ki* (in *S.B.E.*), p. 82.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 418.

¹⁵³ *An*, 13.6.

¹⁵⁴ *Men*, 4(2), 5.

¹⁵⁵ *Shu King*, p. 539. (Quoted in *Analects.*) Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 211, and *Shi King* (in *C.C.*), p. 406.

This becomes even more plain when we learn that the actions of the ruler affect the very weather.

People reasoning on heat and cold assert that, when the sovereign is pleased, it is warm, and when he is angry, it is cold. (I, 278).

If, in the last month of spring, the governmental proceedings proper to winter were observed, cold air would constantly be prevailing; the plants and trees would decay; and in the states there would be great terrors.¹⁵⁶

It is evident that even the slightest action of the emperor was not without significance or effect. Consequently, every act, even to the slightest, had to be performed in the one way which accorded with *li* and the *tao*. ". . . not making a move contrary to propriety:—this is the way for a ruler to cultivate his person."¹⁵⁷ The very food which the emperor ate was designated according to the season. The house in which he lived was ritually prescribed, Granet tells us, and he moved from room to room to accord with the succession of the months.¹⁵⁸

Since his actions were so important, the emperor could not, of course, be left with only the guidance of his own whims or even of his own knowledge. Specialists of two sorts directed him. First there were his teachers.

The three kings and the four dynasties were what they were by their teachers.¹⁵⁹

The ruler treated his master with special respect, and his status was not that of a subject.¹⁶⁰ In the second place, it was the duty of the ministers of the emperor to see that he acted properly. A truly loyal minister, Confucius declares, will not be afraid to tell his sovereign what is right and what is wrong.¹⁶¹ Asked how a ruler should be served, he replied, "Do not impose upon him, and, moreover, withstand him to his face."¹⁶²

The minister occupies a very important place in Chinese history. It is more than probable that this is due partly to the fact that the history was written by members of this class. Confucius goes so

¹⁵⁶ *Li Ki*, p. 266.

¹⁵⁷ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20,14.

¹⁵⁸ Granet, *Danses*, p. 117-19 notes.

¹⁵⁹ *Li Ki* (in *S.B.E.*), p. 88.

¹⁶⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁶¹ *An.* 14,8.

¹⁶² *An.* 14,23.

far as to make the ministers entirely responsible for the actions of the emperor. Zan Yu declared to Confucius that he was unable to restrain his chief from waging an unjust war. Confucius rebuked him, saying:

How can he be used as a guide for a blind man, who does not support him when tottering, nor raise him up when fallen?

And further, you speak wrongly. When a tiger or rhinoceros escapes his cage; when a tortoise or piece of jade is injured in its repository:—whose is the fault?¹⁶³

It is evident that the minister is supposed to act neither for his own profit nor so as to please the Emperor, but according to the *tao*.

The sovereign ruled through the ministers.¹⁶⁴ Thus the *Shu* tells us:

Good and bad government depend upon worthy officers.¹⁶⁵
 "If you [the minister] can be correct in your own person, none will dare but be correct."¹⁶⁶

The Doctrine of the Mean says:

The administration of government lies in *getting proper* men. Such men are to be got by means of *the ruler's own* character. That character is to be cultivated by treading in the *tao*.¹⁶⁷

It will be recalled that we have stressed, throughout, the dynamic emphasis in Chinese thought, the tendency to classify things according to action rather than according to substance. This appears in the present situation. It is through his ministers that a ruler acts, and it is by the standard of his actions that he is allowed to retain, or dispossessed of, his throne (in theory). Therefore, if a bad ruler happen to have good ministers, he may still prosper.

The Master [Confucius] was speaking about the unprincipled course of Duke Ling of Wei, when Ch'i K'ang said, "Since he is of such a character, how is it that he does not lose his state?"

Confucius said, "The Chung-shu Yü has the superintendence of his guests and of strangers; the litanist, T'o, has the management of his ancestral temple; and Wang-sun Chia has the direction of the army and forces:—with such officers as these, how should he lose his state?"¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ *An.* 16,6-7.

¹⁶⁴ *Li Ki* (in *S.B.E.*), p. 448.

¹⁶⁵ *Shu King*, p. 256.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 580.

¹⁶⁷ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20,4.

¹⁶⁸ *An.* 14,20.

Le Prince a du Prestige quand il a des bons Conseillers.¹⁶⁹

That the ministers were not uniformly worthy men, in actual practice, is proved by the frequent laments in the *Shi King* against their oppressions.¹⁷⁰

The cosmos of Sinism may be compared to a huge machine, which functions with perfect smoothness so long as every part remains in proper place and performs its proper function. For even the most insignificant being to fail to do this impaired the harmonious operation of the whole to some extent. It is but natural, therefore, that the greatest emphasis should have been put upon conformity to custom and the keeping of one's proper place.

When the people keep their several places, there will be no poverty; when harmony prevails, there will be no scarcity of people; and when there is such a *contented* repose, there will be no rebellious upsettings.¹⁷¹

The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is; he does not desire to go beyond this.¹⁷²

There is government [and general felicity] when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son.¹⁷³

Conformity to custom was so important that even to change the fashion of clothes was punishable by death.¹⁷⁴

The problem of status is, of course, the chief one in feudalism. The feudatories compose a sort of pyramid of ascending rank; the desire of each one is to raise himself in the scale, but ordinarily he can do that only by displacing his suzerain. This ambition is a constant force working for disintegration; on the other hand, feudalism seemed, in China, necessary in order to give governmental unity to the Empire. Sinism as a philosophy worked as a prop to support the feudal pyramid against its tendency to crumble; it also was so admirably compounded that it left the greatest freedom for rebellion against despotism without impairing its own force or integrity.

The king said, "May a minister put his sovereign to death?"

Mencius said, "He who outrages the benevolence *proper to his nature*, is called a robber; he who outrages righteousness is called a ruffian. The robber and ruffian we call a mere fellow. I have heard of cutting of the fellow Chow,

¹⁶⁹ Granet, *Dances*, p. 79.

¹⁷⁰ *Shi King* (in *C.C.*), p. 170, etc.

¹⁷¹ *An.* 16,1,10.

¹⁷² *Doctrine of the Mean*, 14,1.

¹⁷³ *An.* 12,11,12.

¹⁷⁴ *Li Ki*, (in *S.B.E.*), p. 277.

but I have not heard of putting a sovereign to death."¹⁷⁵

The bad ruler ceases to be emperor, and the ruler so unfortunate as to be killed does not go down in history as good, in any but the rarest cases!

But, while it may be an act of the greatest piety to kill the emperor, it is utterly wrong to impose upon him while leaving him in his office, even if one be strong enough to do so.¹⁷⁶ Such action is to leave one's proper place in the scheme of things. It is because they thus presumed upon their power, and forced the impotent head of the nominally ruling house of Chow to do their bidding, that none of the powerful chiefs of the "Warring Kingdoms" period was able to found a dynasty, Chinese historians are convinced.¹⁷⁷ Had they killed him, and occupied his place instead, the order of things would have been left unimpaired.

Confucius said, "When the Empire follows the *tao*, ceremonies, music, and punitive military expeditions proceed from the Son of Heaven. When the Empire lacks the *tao*, ceremonies, music, and punitive military expeditions proceed from the princes. When these things proceed from the princes, as a rule, the cases will be few in which they do not lose their power in ten generations."¹⁷⁸

Like the emperor, the lesser rulers had to keep careful watch over their actions, even to the smallest, for all were of the greatest import. Even the number of wives the noble might marry was rigidly fixed according to his rank.¹⁷⁹ The noble hunted and fished, Granet declares, not for pleasure but in a ceremonial manner for ceremonial purposes.¹⁸⁰ The story is told of a noble lady who, caught in a fire and unable to go forth without a chaperon, allowed herself to be burned alive rather than transgress the code.¹⁸¹

As the emperor was known by the quality of his ministers, so the ruler of any rank was known by the vassals who made up his court.

Le premier mérite du Chef est de promouvoir les meilleurs vassaux. Son mérite est plus grand, s'il sait attirer à sa cour des fidèles nouveaux et qui vaillent mieux encore que les autres.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ *Mencius*, 1(2),8.

¹⁷⁶ *An.* 3,1; 8,20,4.

¹⁷⁷ Granet, *Danses*, 104.

¹⁷⁸ *An.* 16,2.

¹⁷⁹ Granet, *Danses*, p. 97-98.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

¹⁸¹ Granet, *Religion*, p. 134.

¹⁸² Granet, *Danses*, p. 83.