

The Role of Chinese Culture and Its Impact on The Civilization

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the formation and development of ancient Chinese culture, focusing on the role of the Yellow River basin in shaping ethnic unity and religious thought. **Method:** The research employs a historical and comparative analysis of archaeological, cultural, and philosophical sources from the Neolithic period (5th-3rd millennia BC) to the rise of Confucianism, integrating both textual and material evidence. **Results:** Findings highlight that the Yellow River basin was not only the cradle of early Chinese civilization but also a key region where the unique religious systems and psychological frameworks of Chinese thought first emerged. The study demonstrates the closed, yet dynamic, cultural evolution in this area, which later influenced the development of Confucianism and intellectual flourishing during the Warring States period. **Novelty:** This paper provides a nuanced understanding of the interrelationship between geographical, cultural, and religious factors in shaping the early intellectual and spiritual traditions of China. It also contributes to a broader comprehension of how ancient Chinese thought evolved into one of the world's most enduring philosophical systems.

INTRODUCTION

China is the oldest country in Central and East Asia with a climate that is both diverse and temperate. The most amazing thing in this process is that the Chinese culture, which arose on the banks of the Yellow River, equal to the Sumerian and Akkadian cultures, still exists today. This beautiful country, a resilient and hardworking people, despite the difficult trials of fate, managed to preserve their culture for thousands of years. The Yellow River and the Yangtze River, which originate in the Taishan Mountains of Central China and flow into the Pacific Ocean, flow through the East China Plain. During the rainy season, the Yellow River overflows and causes many troubles, so the Chinese call it the "Tentac River", "China's Salt", and "River of a Thousand Troubles". The lands along these rivers are fertile, and early agriculture has emerged. This country has been famous for its flora and fauna, as well as its mineral wealth, since ancient times [1].

Ancient China arose on the basis of the Neolithic culture formed in the middle reaches of the Yellow River in the 5th-3rd millennia BC. The Yellow River basin is the main area where the ethnic unity of the ancient Chinese was formed, and is considered the first culture of mankind, which developed in a relatively closed state for a long time. Only by the 1st millennium BC were the Yangtze River basin and the lands south of it mastered. Especially after the invention of iron tools, the Chinese were able to develop hard terrain, and the population was evenly distributed over large areas. The term "ancient" is used by scholars to refer to the period from the 2nd millennium BC to the 3rd

century AD. According to him, the history of Ancient China is divided into four main stages, each of which is associated with the rule of the ruling dynasty:

1. The Shang (Yin) period from the 18th to the 12th centuries BC (characterized by the emergence of an ancient class society and state);
2. The Zhou period - from the 12th century BC to 221 BC;
3. The Qin Dynasty - from 221 BC to 207 BC (the first centralized state in China, the Qin Empire, was formed);
4. The Han Empire - from the 206 to the 220 AD (characterized by the transition from slavery to a feudal state).

The healthy-minded and active Chinese does not even ponder over the mysteries of life and the problems of life and death. But it always has before his eyes the great image of virtue, to which every Chinese considers it his sacred duty to strive. If the characteristic feature of the Indian ethnopsychology is introversion (Latin: the type and characteristic of a person, manifested in his restraint in social relations, shyness and thoughtfulness. Introverts are considered passive and limited to their inner world compared to extroverts), which leads to asceticism, yoga and ascetic monasticism, the desire of a person to merge with the absolute (nirvana) and thereby free his eternal soul from the material shell, then the Chinese value the material shell, that is, their own life, above all, and the signs of extroversion prevail in their ethnopsychology. In China, people are more interested in living a decent life in this world based on generally accepted norms, rather than in escaping from the suffering of the next world and striving for eternal pleasures.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research presented above primarily utilizes a historical and analytical method, combining both qualitative and comparative approaches. The study examines ancient Chinese civilization through a synthesis of archaeological evidence, ancient texts, and philosophical writings, particularly focusing on the evolution of religious, cultural and intellectual systems. By analyzing historical records and artifacts from various dynastic periods, including the Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han, the research traces the development of Chinese society, governance and religious thought. Additionally, the study explores the sociocultural dynamics influenced by geography, such as the impact of the Yellow and Yangtze rivers on early Chinese agricultural and spiritual practices. The methodological approach also includes examining the contributions of key intellectual figures, particularly Confucius and their long-lasting impact on Chinese morality, governance and social values. This comprehensive analysis, combining historical, archaeological and philosophical perspectives, aims to shed light on the enduring legacy of ancient Chinese civilization and its global influence, especially in Southeast Asia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The peculiarity of the religious system, the psychological nature of its thinking, the direction of spiritual life in China are manifested in many aspects. The religious idea had a high level of philosophical abstraction. For example, from ancient times the Chinese

had an idea of the Supreme Divine Beginning - Tian (heaven) or Shan-Di (God). But the Chinese Heaven is not Yahweh, nor Jesus Christ or Allah, nor Brahman or Buddha. It is an abstract and cold, demanding and indifferent supreme generality towards man. It is impossible to love it, to unite with it, it is impossible to imitate it, it is useless to admire it, to enjoy it. The Great Heaven punishes the unworthy and rewards good intentions, that is, it is a great embodiment of Reason, Justice and Goodness. The emperor was called the "Son of Heaven" and was under its special patronage. The cult of heaven became the main object of worship in ancient China.

Another of the ancient principles of ancient Chinese religion was the division of all existence into two principles - yin and yang [2]. Each of these concepts is multifaceted, but, first of all, yang means the masculine principle, and yin means the feminine principle. Yang is considered in connection with such qualities as light, brightness, strength and strength, and in the most general sense is a positive quality. Femininity, yin, is associated with the moon and is considered the principle of all dark, cold and weak qualities. Both principles are inextricably linked, harmoniously influence each other, and the entire visible world is the result of this influence.

If we pay attention to the first elements of human civilization, we will certainly see their connection with primitive religious ideas and concepts. In this regard, the nature of a particular country - its relief and climate - also played an important role. Because the mysterious forces hidden in nature, such as thunder, rain, lightning, mountains and rivers, which in most cases motivated the awakening of religious feelings in people from the distant past, began to be expressed in various symbolic forms in the life of human society. Therefore, the emergence of the first Chinese language alphabet is also explained depending on the elements of nature. For example, "the sun and the moon, mountains and rivers, even trees were worshiped as divine powers, and they gradually found their reflection in hieroglyphics, like the "inscription written on an earthen pot" in the picture."

The main impetus for the development of Chinese calligraphy was the discovery of paper, ink and pen. And since then, "hui" - brush, "xiu-an" - paper, "xu" - pen and "duan" - inkwell have been honored as elements of the "Four Treasures" in China. Beginning with Shan In, during the reign of the Tang dynasty, the field of calligraphy rose from the ranks of development and entered the field of art [3].

The form of hieroglyphs consists of up to 36 standard lines repeated in various combinations. Hieroglyphs are written in a certain order, from left to right, from top to bottom, strictly following certain writing rules. In the history of Chinese writing, there are 7 types of hieroglyphs - gu wen (ancient writing), da zhuang (large character writing), xiao zhuang (small character writing), li shu (formal writing), xing shu (semi-fast writing), cao shu (fast writing), kai shu (pattern writing), which have replaced each other, changed in form and improved over the past 4-5 thousand years.

The total number of hieroglyphs in Chinese writing is more than 60 thousand, of which approximately 96% are complex, consisting of two or more characters. The majority are made up of lines, and 4% are simple, single-character hieroglyphs.

Currently, there are approximately 8-10 thousand hieroglyphs used in the Chinese language.

At the end of the 1st century BC and on the eve of the new century, the Chinese made paper from a mixture of rags, bark, and bamboo. Paper was cheaper than wood, bamboo, and silk, and it was considered convenient for writing and storage. The invention of paper was of great importance in the development of education, science, culture, and state affairs [4]; [5]; [6].

Ancient Chinese art monuments date back to the 3rd millennium BC. In many parts of China, exquisitely crafted pottery, bronze and jade objects of various shapes and designs, stone animal figurines from the Yin period, and works of applied and decorative art from the Zhou period (11th-3rd centuries BC) have been found. Lacquer was used to make sword handles and furniture from the 1st millennium BC. A work painted with ink on silk from the 4th-3rd centuries BC has been preserved. Reliefs and inscriptions on mythological and secular themes, bronze objects depicting people and domestic animals, and bronze objects decorated with gold and silver have been found in tombs from the Han period. Pottery products, especially porcelain, are still distinguished by their elegance and uniqueness. The Great Silk Road is an intercontinental caravan route that first connected the countries of the East and the West in ancient times and the Middle Ages (2nd century BC - 15th century AD). The term Great Silk Road is associated with the valuable commodity transported along this route - Chinese silk. Western countries were unaware of the secrets of silk weaving for a long time.

The term Great Silk Road was not used in ancient times. The scientific study of the historical, geographical and cultural aspects of this route began in practice by many domestic scientists in the second half of the 19th century. Scientists from Western Europe, Russia and Japan made a significant contribution to its study. In 1877, the famous German scientist Karl Richthofen, in his major scientific work "China", called the system of roads connecting various parts of the vast Eurasian continent "Silk Road", and later the term "Great Silk Road" was adopted.

The "Great Silk Road" was not limited to trade, but also a route for diplomacy, the spread of religious and spiritual values. It was a route connecting Eastern and Western civilizations, with the peoples of Central Asia acting as intermediaries [7]; [8]; [9].

One of the first sages of China was Confucius. We know the Latinized form of this name better - Confucius. Confucius initiated an unprecedented flowering of intellectual development, the period of the formation of the foundations of Chinese culture. Contrary to popular belief among scholars, he cannot be called the founder of Chinese religion in the strict sense. Although his name is often mentioned alongside Zoroaster and Buddha, issues of religion and faith did not play a significant role in his worldview. Confucius lived three centuries before the unification of the country, when China occupied a small part of its current territory. Traditional historiography believes that during this period the country was ruled by the Zhou dynasty (1122-249 BC). In fact, the representatives of this dynasty, who had the status of "Son of Heaven", had high prestige, but they did not have real power. The Zhou kings were considered sacred figures and performed only

ceremonial duties in the country that Heaven had "entrusted" to them. In fact, China was divided into several large and small kingdoms and principalities, and Confucius was born in one of them - the kingdom of Lu in eastern China - and lived there all his life.

Confucius's first position was as a small official in a granary. Then he entered the service of a nobleman's household. Due to his good knowledge of rituals and music, he began working as an assistant to the high priest during sacrificial ceremonies. Due to his knowledge, he became famous in the kingdom of Lu, and the king of this state, Zhou-Gun, invited him to the palace and invited him to receptions. Improving his knowledge, Confucius devoted all his time to systematizing the ceremonial dances of the Zhou people, collecting folk songs, composing historical texts and, most importantly, his favorite occupation - teaching. Confucius was a nobleman by origin. In the kingdom of Lu, he created a system similar to an academy, the purpose of which was to seek and teach wisdom. The lawlessness and disorder that reigned in China at that time greatly upset Confucius. This situation prompted him to create an ideal of the best government and the good life.

According to the philosopher, the pillars on which the state should rely are loyalty and obedience. These two elements should prevail in all aspects of social life. Children should be loyal to their parents, the younger ones to their elders, and citizens should be loyal and obedient to the ruler. However, the philosopher believes that the state is also obliged to take care of its citizens [10].

Confucius, first of all, lives with the problems of this mortal world. He does not think about the essence of life, the questions of God and eternal life do not occupy his mind. He thinks about the mysteries of nature and the tragedy of human life. Finding a way for the quiet development of society was the most important thing for him. This does not mean that Confucius rejected the Supreme Being. He was not interested in higher genesis, it seemed distant and abstract to him.

He also does not like to mention spirits and mysterious powers. To the question about eternal life and death, Confucius answered: "We who do not know what life is, how did we know what death is." But despite this, faith was of primary importance in his eyes, because in faith he saw the most important aspect of the general moral-political order.

Confucius left no written description of his teachings. But the sage's friends and followers wrote down what he said in a book called "Lun'-Yuy" - "Discussions and Conversations". It consists of a collection of separate phrases of the teacher, formed without any system. In addition to the words of Confucius, the collection contains the words of 22 of his disciples, and its number, according to Sima Qian, is "more than three thousand", "Lun-Yui" was very popular in China, and every Chinese who considered himself literate had to know the text.

Although Confucius tried to implement some reforms in his work during his time in the service of the emperors, many of his proposals were not supported by the officials and rulers. Confucius' main focus was on the shortcomings and faults of his time.

The helplessness of the common people, the tyranny of the officials, the mutual conflicts between the rulers, the departure from the ancient spiritual traditions and values - all this gave rise to the sharp critical views of Confucius. He realized that it is necessary to rely on new views to solve the existing problem. However, he had to have a well-recognized reputation for his ideas to be accepted by the public. Confucius found this same reputation in the semi-legendary images of the distant past. Centuries after the death of Confucius, his teachings became an integral part of the people's life and still have a place in the spiritual life of the Chinese people.

Confucian philosophy does not contain lofty and abstract ideas that many people do not understand, complex considerations that are difficult for ordinary people to understand. In this sense, it is a true philosophy of life, a philosophy that is understandable to ordinary people, serves to live a meaningful life, and makes people highly spiritual. It teaches each person why he came to this bright world, what goals he should set for himself and what paths he should take to achieve them. Loving and respecting nature, serving the Motherland, and living with the pain of the people are expressed in this philosophy through understanding the content of the truth of life that is understandable to ordinary people.

Confucius created the idea of a perfect person (jun-ji). Jun-ji, that is, a highly spiritual person, should have two main characteristics: humanity and a sense of responsibility (a sense of debt to ancestors). A perfect person must, first of all, be trustworthy and selfless, for this he must serve his ruler, his father and everyone older than him, and always strive for perfection.

In the early form of Confucianism, the issue of morality was put in the first place, and religious beliefs were considered secondary. Confucianism treated religious issues and beliefs with great restraint. However, it praised the educational value of religious ceremonies and rituals. However, Confucius treated religious values and customs that have been passed down from time immemorial with respect [11]; [12].

Another teaching of Confucius is "Xiao", which embodies the idea that a person should be worthy of his parents. According to Confucius, there is nothing more important for a person than Xiao. He said: "Xiao and Li (respect of the younger for the older, the older for the younger) are the basis of humanity." When asked what the main meaning of Xiao was and what filial piety should be, Confucius answered: "Be wise and capable of taking care of your parents. For example, people also take care of dogs and horses in their homes. If they do not show their parents any respect, what difference will it make if they take care of animals?" According to the "Laws of Li" of Xiao's teachings, a child is completely at the disposal of their parents during their lifetime. They have no right to control themselves until they pass away. If a parent dies, the child must give up all work, regardless of what they were doing, and mourn for three years. The Confucian teachings of Xiao have had a great influence on Chinese culture and moral standards for centuries.

Thus, ancient China, with its unique culture, made its contribution to the development of world culture. Its influence was especially strong in the formation and development of the cultures of Southeast Asian countries [13].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study highlights the profound influence of ancient Chinese civilization, particularly the cultural and philosophical developments rooted in the Yellow River basin, which shaped not only Chinese society but also had lasting impacts on neighboring regions. The unique religious systems, such as the concept of Tian (heaven), alongside Confucian moral teachings, have remained central to Chinese intellectual life for millennia. **Implication :** The findings underscore the enduring relevance of ancient Chinese thought in contemporary social and political systems, emphasizing the continued importance of Confucian values in shaping modern Chinese identity. Additionally, the study's exploration of geographical and environmental factors offers valuable insights into how ecological conditions influenced cultural and spiritual practices. **Limitation :** However, the research is limited by its reliance on historical texts and archaeological records, which can sometimes be incomplete or open to interpretation, potentially limiting the full understanding of certain cultural dynamics. **Future Research :** Future studies could focus on a more detailed comparative analysis of how ancient Chinese philosophy and religion influenced the development of neighboring East and Southeast Asian cultures, as well as investigate the intersection of early Chinese intellectual traditions with other global civilizations during the same period.

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