

The Concepts of *Hua* and *Yi* in the *Book of Poetry*

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Abstract: This paper aims to discuss some lines from the *Book of Poetry* (Shijing 詩經) that give some indication of the origins and development of the characteristics of Chinese cultural self-consciousness. It is tentatively concluded that the self-consciousness of ancient Chinese is based on the moral commitment created from the *youthuan yishi*, and meanwhile on the culturally hierarchical and self-centered attitude toward the neighboring peoples.

I. Introduction:

This paper attempts to discuss some lines of the poems from the *Book of Poetry* (Shijing 詩經), which are related to ancient Chinese cultural self-consciousness and the attitude toward foreign peoples. Hopefully such discussions could offer some insight into the cultural mentality of the ancient Chinese, which is often conveniently taken to be the synonym of Han people. Those consciousness and conceptions in the *Book of Poetry*, a collection compiled not later than Spring-Autumn period, could give some indication of the origins and development of the characteristics of Chinese cultural mentality. Hsu Cho-yun's 許倬雲 claim is persuasive that the conception of *Huaxia* was initiated by the integration of all states under the rule of Zhou.¹

II. *Hua* 華, *xia* 夏 and *zhongguo* 中國:

In ancient Chinese culture, it is *hua* 華 and *yi* 夷 that are the fundamental terms used in denoting "self" and "other" and employed in the expression of cultural identity. The ethno-cultural distinction between *hua* and *yi* is clearly postulated by Confucius in the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳: "裔不謀夏, 夷不亂華. Those distant people have nothing to do with our great land; those wild tribes must not be permitted to create disorder among our flowery States."²

The usual names suggesting ancient Han people's cultural-ethnic identity are *hua*, *xia* 夏, *huaxia* 華夏, *zhuxia* 諸夏. In the *Book of Poetry*, however, the word *hua* only refers to the flower, such as "灼灼其華 how its flowers blaze" (Tao yao #6), and "皇皇者華 bright are the flowers" (Huanghuang zhe hua #163).³ The word *xia* often means Xia dynasty, for example "在夏後之世 it is the times of the Lord of Xia" (Dang #255). Only twice *xia* refers to the great lands of Zhou states, for one of its etymologic meanings is great. The first is "我求懿德, 肆于時夏. I will cultivate admirable virtue./ To spread over these great regions" (Shi ma #273), and the other is "陸渚于時夏. The rules of social duty were diffused throughout these great regions" (Si wen #275). Both poem 273 and poem 275 praise the ancestor kings of Zhou House whose virtuous sovereign has a great influence over all the States.

The more noteworthy term in the *Book of Poetry* is *zhongguo* 中國. Although it is by no means equal to the later word referring to the modern nation of China, this term has meanings that indicate intriguingly the early consciousness of a Chinese cultural identity. In poem 253 "Min lao", there appears the line in four times "惠此中國 Treat the center of kingdom with kindness." Due to the appearance of another line "惠此京師 Treat the capital with kindness," we know *zhongguo* in this line merely means the center of the kingdom 國之中, with the same syntactic structure as 中谷 the midst of the valley (Ge tan #2), and 中澤 the middle of the marsh (Hong yan #181). In other words, *zhongguo* here refers to the capital, or the central royal state to which the feudal states owed allegiance. Nonetheless, *zhongguo* in the other two poems can be seen as referring to the political-cultural community including almost all other feudal states rather than to the center of states. In poem 255 "Dang":

文王曰: 咨! 咨女殷商。女無烈于中國, 飲惡以爲德。……
小大近喪, 人向乎由行。內饗于中國, 罩及鬼方。

King Wen said: Come!
Come, you Yin and Shang!
You rage and seethe in the Middle Kingdom,
You count the heaping up of resentment as inward power.……
Little and great you draw near to ruin.
Men long to walk right ways,
But you rage in the Middle Kingdom,
And as far as the land of Gui.

According to the traditional commentary, this poem assumes the warnings to King Li 厲王 and attributes the miseries and danger of ruin not to heaven but to King Li. In tortuous manner, the poet turns to introduce King Wen 文王 to deliver his warnings to Zhou 紂, the last king of the Shang Dynasty. The opposition of *zhongguo* 中國 and *guifang* 鬼方 (demon regions)⁴ makes us to take the former expression as the term of community of Zhou's royal House and all feudal states. Kong Yingda 孔穎達 makes out a certain exegesis: "中國是九州 *zhongguo* is the name of the Nine States."⁵ The latter term is precisely the usual name meaning the geographical and cultural ancient China. Chen Huan 陳奐 also points out that due to the opposition of *zhongguo* and *guifang* the former refers to all states as *zhuxia* and the latter to the regions outside the community of *zhuxia*.⁶

Zhongguo with the similar meaning appears in the other poem #257 "Sang rou":

天降喪亂, 滅我立王。降此誦賊, 穉穉卒瘁。哀憫中國, 具贅卒荒。

Heaven brought down death and disorder upon us,
Destroying our king already enthroned.
Bringing down a plague of locusts
To turn our farms to ruin.
Pitiful is the middle Kingdom,
All its affairs lay in waste.

The character reprehended in this poem is allegedly still King Li. The poet laments the misery and disorder caused by King Li's oppression and listening to bad counselors. It ends in the dethronement of King Li when people rose against him and he only saved his life by fleeing for a remote border.

III. *Youhuan yishi* 憂患意識:

A common phenomenon can be discerned in these lines regarding the conception of the geographical and political community based on the Zhou House. The two poems are supposed to have been created in a time of disorder and suffering, which undermines and ruins the sovereign foundation of the Zhou House and then damages the high civilization of cultural community under the Zhou royal rule. These adversities must have harmed the CENTRAL status of the community. The employment of the word *zhongguo* can be viewed as a strong self-consciousness about the fate and existence of political and cultural community. This consciousness could be called *youthuan yishi* 憂患意識 (a sense of facing the adversity and assuming man's responsibility to the situation). Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, in his brilliant study of the thought in the period of Pre-Han, takes this sense as the prominent cultural and spiritual achievement by the Zhou people. It can be traced back in the *Book of Changes* (Zhouyi 周易): "作易者其有憂患乎. Those who composed the changes had great care and sorrow." Xu then writes that such a *youthuan yishi* emphasizes the value of man to rise up against the calamity whereas people in the Shang dynasty entirely depended on the power of the spirits in their life and government. This sense highlights a strong fear in their moral judgment and postulates success or failure to be determined by the behavior of man. Accordingly people of the Zhou assumed a sense of responsibility to rectify the miserable world.⁷ C. H. Wang, inspired by Xu's argument, observes that in Zhou people's consciousness "[t]he king, inheriting the virtue of his ancestors, takes up the responsibility to find a decorum in response to the heavenly mandate... [I]f we do not strive as vigorously as the earlier kings did, we will be disowned and the throne ruined."⁸ Poem 273 and 275 containing the term *xia* precisely embody such self-consciousness of moral and responsible commitment in other forms.

The word *zhou* 周 as the name of Zhou House or the capital appears in about 22 poems. Most of them delineate the foundation and development of the Zhou people (poem 235 "Wen wang," poem 236 "Da ming," poem 241 "Huang yi" and others). Interestingly, the word *yue* 憂 frequently emerges or even serves as the theme in several poems. There are 8 times of *yue* and 4 times of another synonymous word *ai* 哀 in the poem 192 "Zheng yue," the culmination of which is the line "赫赫宗周, 褒姒滅之. Majestic was the capital of Zhou/ But Lady Bao Si destroyed it." This poem and poem 191, in which *yue* appears 2 times, both convey the lamentation over the miserable state of the kingdom caused by the conduct of King You 幽王. The intention of these poems focuses on blaming the injustice, indulgence and oppression exposed in the conduct of a King and his officials.

Cheng Chung-ying 成中英 renders the *youthuan yishi* sense as "melancholy" in his unpublished paper "Morality of *Dao-De* 道德 and Overcoming of Melancholy in Classical Chinese Philosophy," which is quoted

and developed by Lauren Pfister in his study of the relationship between Wang Tao and the Ruist melancholy. Pfister is right to argue that "[t]he prominence of the concept of a Chinese form of 'melancholy' in the *Shijing* is undeniable, to the point that it may be considered a central leit-motif for the whole collection of classical poems..." According to their examination, four forms of this sense can be discovered. The first is *youchou* 憂愁 (pensive sadness) that is related to the sense of distance from family and friends, and then it is intensified into the second form *youshang* 憂傷 (distressed sorrow), an inward poignant pain. The third is a more thoughtful form appearing in the filial son or obedient officer who "anxiously worries" (*youlü* 憂慮) about fulfilling his duties. "Then there is the mood of 'miserable misgiving' (*youthuan* 憂患) due to a profound sense of ontic and moral threat arising from the loss (or the self-conscious possibility of the loss) of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命)." In terms of the classification by Cheng Chung-ying, Pfister declares that "[m]ore significant is the conceptual progression in the melancholy from 'lower' sensate feeling to a 'higher' moral dilemma..."⁹

IV. 五夷:

The cultural consciousness of the ancient Chinese is also expressed in their attitudes toward foreign peoples and cultures. *Rong* 戎, *di* 狄, *yi* 夷 and *man* 蠻 are broad classifications of cultural-ethnic identities used by the *huaxia* people to label "barbarians" who lived beyond the realm of direct *huaxia* cultural-political influence. Although *yi* is generally taken as the shared names of the barbarian tribes, the four names are in later times differentiated by the four directions: *rong* (West), *di* (North), *yi* (East), and *man* (South).

In the Zhou dynasty, *rong* and *di* can be always substituted by the name *xianyun* 蠻狁.¹⁰ And these terms are the general names of the northern and western wild tribes. Due to their usual raiding on the *huaxia* people, they are often portrayed in the traditional documents as greedy, aggressive and acquisitive. In the *Book of Poetry*, "蠻狁孔熾. The *xianyun* are ablaze" so that "我是用急 / 王于出征 We have no time to lose! We are going to battle" (#177 "Liu yue"). The soldiers complain: "靡室靡家, 蠻狁之故; 不遑啓居, 蠻狁之故. We have no house, no home/ Because of the *xianyun*! We can not rest or bide/ Because of the *xianyun*" (#167 "Cai wei"). The confidence of conquering *xianyun* can be discovered: "蠻狁于襄. The *xianyun* were sure to be swept away" (#168 "Chu che").

What is significant is a tone of arrogance and even cultural chauvinism, which is discernible besides the confidence of conquering and success. In poem 300 "Bi gong," the poet declares: "戎狄是膺, 荆楚是塹, 則莫我敢承. To deal with the tribes of *rong* and *di*! And to punish *jing* and *shu*! None dares to resist us." There are similar lines: "淮夷來同, 莫不率從. 及彼南夷, 莫不率從. 莫敢不諾. The tribes of the Huai river came to terms/ There were none that did not obey!... And those tribes of the south-/ There were none that did not obey/ None that dare refuse assent." The diction these lines assuming discloses the self-important attitude of *huaxia* community, who belittle the peripheral and barbarian tribes. Those tribes are always compared to animals and being represented as subhuman. In *Zuozhuan* 左傳 *rong* and *di* are compared to wolves. We also find in *Zuozhuan* these words: "德以柔中國, 刑以威四夷. It is awarded by which the people of the Middle State are cherished; it is by severity which the wild tribes around it are vited."¹¹ A politically and culturally hierarchical distinction are conventionally set out between *hua* and *yi*, such as the words in *Liji* 禮記: "其在東夷, 北狄, 西戎, 南蠻, 雖大曰子. The chiefs among the wild tribes of the *yi* on the east, the *di* on the north, the *rong* on the west, and the *man* on the south, however great their territories, are called 'counts'."¹²

The southern groups are more often belittled. In Poem 178, it is said: "爾獯鬻, 大邦爲讎. Foolish were you, tribe of *jing*! Presuming to oppose our great region." And toward the end of the poem we read: "蠻荆來威. And the tribes of *jing* came, awed by his majesty." The *jing* represents *Chu* state, which was viewed as the wild tribe in the Western Zhou though after *Chunqiu* (Spring-Autumn) period it was completely integrated into the *huaxia* cultural community and served as an important part in the later development of Chinese culture. The term *huayiyi* 淮夷, in poem 262 "Jiang han" and poem 300 "Bi gong," also means the southern tribes. Perhaps the southerners are not so valiant and brutal as the northerners, and gradually they were assimilated by the *huaxia* culture whereas the northern are to some extent difficult to be integrated.

V. Conclusion:

It could be tentatively concluded that the *youthuan yishi* of the ancient Chinese is pertaining to the moral and political self-cultivation to against the disordered situation rather than to the worries about the invading of other peoples and tribes. The conventional names of the neighboring peoples, *yi* and others, show precisely the self-satisfied attitude of *huaxia* culture despising the peripheries, though some tribes, such as *xiongnu* 匈奴, were rather aggressive and disturbing to rulers of ancient China and were somewhat influential in several dynasties' choosing of the state capital. The Heavenly Mandate (*tianming*) would be lost if the king and officials had no righteous conduct, but even in such conditions, the Heavenly Mandate would never go out to the barbarian tribes. The radically cultural mentality is laid on the need to improve the moral situation to suitable to the Heavenly Mandate. The self-consciousness of ancient Chinese is thus based on the moral commitment of self-cultivation, and meanwhile on the culturally hierarchical and self-centered attitude toward the neighboring peoples. This tradition would not be changed until the Opium War in the Middle of 19 century.

¹ Hsu, *Xizhou shi*, p.137.

² My translation is from James Legge's *The Chinese Classics*, vol.5, p.777.

³ The translations of lines from the *Book of Poetry* are based on Legge's *The Chinese Classics* vol.4 and Arthur Waley's *The Book of Songs*.

⁴ Mao's commentary takes the 鬼方 as the general name of distant quarters (鬼方, 遠方也). Zhu Xi thinks it is the name of one of kingdoms founded by the wild tribes (鬼方, 遠夷之國也). For the former see *Shisan jing zhushu* p.553, and the latter see Zhu's *Shi jizhuan* p.204.

⁵ *Shisan jing zhushu*, p.553.

⁶ Chen Huan: "鬼方與中國對文。中國, 諸夏之國, 則鬼方爲諸夏之外。" See Chen's *Shi Maoshi zhuan shu* vol.25.

⁷ Xu, *Zhongguo renxing lun shi*, p.20.

⁸ C. H. Wang, *From Ritual to Allegory*, pp.24-5.

⁹ Pfister, "Hearing Their Ghosts Jittering During the Rain," pp.9-11.

¹⁰ The name of "northern barbarians" varies from time to time. Wang Guowei, in his celebrated article "Guifang kunyi xianyun kao 鬼方昆夷蠻狁考," summarizes them and offers a comprehensive conclusion. See Wang's *Guantang jilin*, pp.583-606.

¹¹ *Shisan jing zhushu*, p.1821. The translation is from James Legge's *The Chinese Classics* vol.5, p.196.

¹² *Shisan jing zhushu*, p.1265. The translation is based on James Legge's *Li Chi*, p.111.

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