

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# U·M·I

University Microfilms International  
A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA  
313 761-4700 800 521-0600



---

**Order Number 9304670**

**Max Weber's contribution to 'knowledge' of the origins of  
Chinese thought**

**Goldstein, Robyn Ann, Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1991**

**Copyright ©1991 by Goldstein, Robyn Ann. All rights reserved.**

**U·M·I**

300 N. Zeeb Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106



MAX WEBER'S CONTRIBUTION TO 'KNOWLEDGE'

OF THE ORIGINS OF CHINESE THOUGHT

by

Robyn A. Goldstein

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in  
Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The City of  
New York.

1991

1991

Robyn A. Goldstein  
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 2, 1951  
Date

May 7, 1951  
Date

Edmund R. Rothenberg  
Chair of Examining Committee

Robert D. Clark  
Executive Officer,

Mike [unclear]

Edmund Rothenberg

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Dr. Joseph Bensman for his leading me to an understanding of Max Weber. If only he were alive today.

Thanks also to: Dr. Alfred Jones for his profound understanding of the interrelationship between science and philosophy and insights into the human condition.

My friend and teacher Dr. Michael Brown for listening.

Dr. Bernard Rosenberg for the ideas, queries, and assistance in bringing this study to its conclusion.

Drs. Sidney Aronson who so willingly took on the responsibility for an "orphaned" student and Hylan Lewis for his organizational skills in defining the original problem.

I particularly want to thank my husband Aaron Fuchs for believing in me and this project.

In addition my friend, Lloyd Klein for his willingness to provide help in technical matters, Helen Edersheim for her editorial assistance, and Gerral Felson for her friendship. I offer warm thanks Murray Itzkowitz and friends John, Judy, Bruce, Bob, Laura, MJ, and Bonnie for spurring me on.

And finally, a special thank you to my parents for showing me, indeed, how the difference between the possible and the impossible can be a measure of a person's will. My mother, Jean Goldstein for conveying her love and appreciation of Oriental art and culture and my father, Harold Goldstein for his insistence on defining understanding, one of the most important underpinnings of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iv
INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER 1.	MAX WEBER'S ENIGMATIC RELATIONSHIP TO AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY: WHY STUDY THE CASE OF CHINESE THOUGHT?	
	1. Knowledge of Weber's Tools, and Problems and of Their Conceptual Interconnections	3
	2. Knowledge of the Comparative Method	5
	3. Knowledge of the Limits of Science and of Empirical Science in Particular	12
	4. Knowledge of Weber's Achievement of Raising Empirical Sociology to the Level of a Science	16
	5. Knowledge of Joseph Bensman's Contribution to American Sociology	26
CHAPTER 2.	THE STANDPOINT OF A MODERN MAN	
CHAPTER 3.	THE DECISION TO INVESTIGATE THE EXISTENCE OF THE BACHELOR HOUSE	
	1. The Extremes of Primitive Organization	66
	2. Current Scientific Thinking	72
	3. Economic Organization	87
	4. Military, Political, and Social Organization	92
CHAPTER 4.	THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CULTURE	
	1. The Terrain	100
	2. The Military Symbols	102
	3. The Role of Ancestral Spirits	124
CHAPTER 5.	THE FOUNDING OF A CIVILIZATION IN CHINA	
	1. The Arrival of the Horse	139
	2. China's "Homeric" Age	142
	3. The Old Anchorets	150
	4. The Oldest Songs of the Shih Ching	152

	vi
4. The Oldest Songs of the Shih Ching	152
5. The Old Warrior Kings	153
CHAPTER 6.	
KNOWLEDGE OF THE CASE OF CHINESE THOUGHT	
1. The Risk of Extinction	157
2. The Problem of Theodicy	160
3. The Idea of Freedom	164
4. The Social Contract	174
CONCLUSION	178
BIBLIOGRAPHY	179

## Introduction

When Max Weber wrote of "an unbroken unity in the case of Chinese thought" he was conveying the 'knowledge' or understanding which his work generated. Yet, who has known of Max Weber's contribution to empirical knowledge of the circumstances of Chinese thought or of Weber's raising empirical sociology to the level of a science? And why is American sociology virtually ignorant of Weber's accomplishment? The study will address these questions first in preparation for an investigation that seeks to understand the process whereby Weber himself came to such knowledge.

Max Weber is usually thought of as only a Theorist. This essay not only develops a refutation of that conviction but also aims to change the way Weber is read in the English-speaking world. For if one studies Weber's writings from the standpoint of trying to understand the actual course of events that led to his decision to investigate the existence of the military organization of the bachelor house in China and from that decision to knowledge of the unbroken unity that Chinese thought represents, one finds that Weber makes a contribution to empirical knowledge of the origins of Chinese thought.

## Chapter 1

MAX WEBER'S ENIGMATIC RELATION TO AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY:  
THE CASE OF CHINESE THOUGHT<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps Max Weber knew of a unity that was not broken in the case of Chinese thought. A literal translation of Weber's own words does seem to convey his understanding that the unity in thinking of life and of worldly events as magically derived was never broken in China in the sense of a permanent fracture. It was intact at the time of Weber's writing "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions." Yet, the Gerth and Mills translation makes no mention of an "unbroken unity." It reads as "there is a unity in the realm of magic and in the purely magical image of the world, as we have noted in the case of Chinese thought."<sup>2</sup> This study will take Weber actually at his word. The specific aim is to establish the foundation of Weber's claim to knowledge of the circumstances of Chinese thought, to explain how Weber (who was not a sinologist) became aware of the "unbroken unity" that Chinese thought represented, and to explain why Weber considered this aspect of his work to be particularly important.

- 
1. For a clear picture of where the author's interest and appreciation for Asian culture originated see Jean Goldstein (Tao Yin), "The Quest for Satsuma Ware," in Arts of Asia, Volume 21, Number 2, March-April 1991, pp.86-94.
  2. Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, translated and edited by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 349.

For it seems that Weber was not merely presenting a finding here. He actually had arrived at a causal explanation of the fact that the Chinese were not of a mind to enter "the path of rationalization which is peculiar to the Occident."<sup>3</sup> Why then concern ourselves today with explicating the text of Weber's writing at this particular juncture?

1. Knowledge of Weber's Tools, and Problems, and of  
Their Conceptual Interconnections

Granted Max Weber knew of no ideals that are scientifically ascertainable when he began writing the essay The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, first published in German in 1904-05.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 1909 that Weber specifically acknowledged the point:

We know of no scientifically ascertainable ideals. To be sure, that makes our efforts more arduous than those of the past, since we are expected to create our ideals from within our breast in the very age of subjectivist culture; but we must not and cannot promise a fool's paradise and an easy road to it, neither in thought nor in action. It is the stigma of our human dignity that the peace of our souls cannot be as great as

- 
3. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1958), p. 25.
4. Talcott Parsons, "Preface To New Edition," The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. xlii.

the peace of one who dreams of such a paradise.<sup>5</sup>

Possibly Weber knew then, from personal experience, of the expectation that scientists generate ideals in the age of subjectivist culture into which he was born. Clearly he aimed to bring about a revolutionary change in the attitude of his contemporaries. He seemed to recognize that without such a change of attitude not only would his intellectual approach to science continue to be confounded with an intellectual approach that gives a certain meaning to inner worldly occurrences, but also that his claim to have demonstrated that sociology is a science which can contribute to the causal explanation of phenomena that are historically and culturally important would go unnoticed. In this context, it is understandable (albeit regrettable) that Weber was not so explicit as he could have been about his motives; thus, he leaves some readers thinking that they can legitimately use his words to speak for themselves personally, thereby ignoring the understanding of the universal history of culture that Weber himself had achieved and leaving others believing that history is "the handmaiden of sociology"<sup>6</sup> and never the reverse. What was Weber's method of dealing with the

- 
5. Max Weber, Economy and Society, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (University of California Press, 1978), p.xxxiii.
  6. Otto B. van der Sprenkel, "Max Weber on China," in History and Theory Studies in Philosophy of History (Mouton & Co., 1966), Volume iii, from a symposium on theory and history held June 1961, Harvard University under the sponsorship of the Henry P. Hendall Foundation.

problem of how to avoid the human temptation to mix personal questions with specialized factual analyses?

## 2. Knowledge of the Comparative Method

Not until after Weber lectured on the "Outlines of Universal Social and Economic History" (during the winter semester of 1919-20)<sup>7</sup> is it clear that Weber continued to distinguish what is from what is not universal to the economic and social history of culture as he wrote each segment of the series of studies beginning with The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. In this way, Weber avoided the idealization of the peculiarities of any one culture, including his own. Also, Weber earned the right to claim knowledge of the history of culture in the West, in China, in India, and in the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome.<sup>8</sup> At least, the publication of The Protestant Ethic and the

---

7. See Max Weber, General Economic History, translated by Frank H. Knight (New York: Collier Books, 1961).

8. The actual significance that Weber attached to General Economic History may lie not "in the penetration of the conception according to which a scheme of analysis of economic life is fitted to the exposition of the preparation for and development of modern capitalism," as the German editors of the English translation would have us believe. It lies in the penetration of the idea according to which certain tools are required in preparation for determining not only how modern capitalism arose in the West, but also how capitalism may be found in all civilized countries (including China). In other words, the actual importance that Weber attached to the series of lectures was the idea that we need to understand what is and what is not universal to the economic and social history of culture.

Spirit of Capitalism in 1904-05,<sup>9</sup> The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations<sup>10</sup> in 1909, Confucianism and Taoism in 1916, The Religion of India in 1916, and Ancient Judaism in 1917<sup>11</sup> does seem to bear this out. Specifically, in the course of writing the lectures known to the English-speaking world as General Economic History, Weber himself learned that it was possible to infer what primitive agricultural life originally was like everywhere in the world from evidence of living primitive peoples. Weber pointed out that among living primitive peoples there were two possible extremes in the form of organization associated with hoe use, depending upon whether the household is or is not self-sufficient. He supposed that in the latter case there is a reason for assuming the previous existence of an organization. Everywhere he found households that were not sufficient unto themselves (in the sense of an organization of women from separate families doing agricultural work under the leadership of a head women, but depending upon the men to take care of the heavy work), he also found that field work fell to the woman. The man (who was both hunter and warrior) was absent. In effect, Weber had reason to suspect that the man's absence is due to the

---

9. Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p. xiii.

10. Weber wrote three versions of this essay for the Dictionary of State Theory in 1897, 1898, and 1909. We mention only the last version because, as Dirk Kasler explained with each revision "the scope of the project increased considerably." See Dirk Kasler, Max Weber (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 36.

11. Lewis Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p. 241.

previous existence of a military organization (a bachelor house) where the men have taken up residence. Weber built a foundation upon which he could not assume (nor could we) that economic organization among primitive peoples of the past was the same everywhere or primary. Weber reportedly knew of an instance of living primitive peoples at the time of his writing where there was no reason to suppose that economic organization was preceded by any other form of organization. Hence, we learned in the course of studying the problem of what prompted Weber's decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house in China, that Weber had no preconceptions about what he might find to be the oldest form of organization in the region. Weber began his investigation with an historical question to which he did not know the answer: military organization or economic organization - which came first?

Weber had already determined, as we have seen, that the so-called hoe culture dominates primitive agricultural life everywhere. Clearly then Weber must have known of occasions where the transition from hoe culture (where the man uses a pointed stick to make holes where seeds are dropped by the woman) to agriculture (where the more durable plow is employed) occurred effortlessly, the man and the woman continuing to perform technically different types of services in the interest of production. He found that the level of technological standing was not an adequate criterion for distinguishing primitive agriculture from primitive organization. Weber had come to

understand that without an organizing principle the concept of an organization, whether primitive or not, would not make sense. A sociological investigation must begin with the quest for a certain organizing principle. As Weber suggests, however, a **genuine** empirical sociological investigation may not begin before addressing the question of what actually caused the members of an organization to feel that they belong together and hence "to behave in such a way that a community not only comes into being but continues to exist;"<sup>12</sup> only then can the subjective understanding of the activities of the members be accomplished, subjective understanding being the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Since we already know of Weber's decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house, the appropriate questions of intellectual history are: 1) When did Weber first suspect that militarism was the original basis of organization in China? 2) what prompted Weber as a sociologist to regard the achievement of culture by the military organization of bachelor house as comparable to the cultural achievements of the Lamas of Tibet? These construction works from the standpoint of their size and apparent quality "measure up to the largest and most famous" of human artifacts.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, this author used the outlines for a sociology

---

12. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 18.

13. Ibid., p.15.

14. Ibid. pp. 1168-70.

of understanding that were delineated in Economy and Society to determine, as Weber did, why it is necessary that a genuine empirical sociological investigation begin with the quest for an organizing principle. Why then did Weber begin his actual investigation of Chinese culture (unlike his previous investigation of culture in the West) with a discussion of evidence that could be construed as suggesting an organizing principle? Weber had realized that current knowledge of Chinese culture insofar as it provided evidence of the importance that was originally attached to militarism constituted a reliable means of establishing the existence of culture in China where a verifiable conception of the state of mind of the participants was not possible.

By the time Weber presented the "Outlines of Universal and Social Economic History," he had already determined that "the original Chinese economic organization is found"<sup>15</sup> not in the well system that Chinese authors regarded as "the true national system of land distribution"<sup>16</sup> but in the clan economy that was still commonplace in the Chinese village at the time of Weber's writing.<sup>17</sup> How did Weber determine that the concept of the clan was appropriate here or to what the concept referred? The author found Weber's answer to these questions in the second book of the series which Weber called "Confucianism and Taoism." From the

---

15. Weber, General Economic History, p. 34.

16. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 72.

17. Weber, General Economic History, p. 34.

wording of imperial tax decrees as they appeared in the sources available to him, Weber inferred that the family was the unit that was taxed. To what did the concept of a family refer? The decrees were specific in mentioning that "this included those 15 to 56 who were its working members (ting)."<sup>18</sup> The need for many hands apparently was an indication to Weber that the decrees referred to an extended family in the sense of a household "based on parent and child relations but comprising grandchildren, brothers, cousins and outsiders."<sup>19</sup> Weber had inferred that China was an individual case of the existence of extended families where the idea of a blood relationship had gained a significance. For as Weber himself suggested, where physiological blood ties gain importance the term "kin group (Sippe)" is appropriate. And as he wrote, perhaps as a reminder for himself,

We should keep in mind that the kin group is not an extended or decentralized household or a superordinate structure uniting several households: that may be the case, but as rule it is not.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in the course of considering the stringent tax requirements, Weber performed certain calculations that led to his concluding that the original clan economy was not a genuine blood-kinship group or sib but a different type of association whose members thought of one another as kin (whether or not they actually were) that extended to the entire rural population and

---

18. Weber, The Religion of China, pp. 65-6.

19. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 365.

20. Weber, Economy and Societt, p. 365.

that perhaps was limited originally to noble families. But how? What did Weber mean by "noble families" in this particular context? And had Weber actually come to understand their origins? For the moment, these questions are rhetorical. What they express are the thoughts and further questions that came to this author's mind and the reasoning that occurred in the course of trying to determine what Weber, after having considered the fiscal needs of the Chinese state, actually meant when he wrote

It is not at all self-evident that a different association, which was perhaps originally confined to noble families, could have comprised, since remote times the entire rural population.<sup>21</sup>

By then, Weber was certain that "'charisma' was always an extraordinary force (maga, orenda)"<sup>22</sup> in China linked "to some definite carrier- person or object,"<sup>23</sup> and "revealed through sorcery and heroism."<sup>24</sup> He had determined that "originally the charismatic quality could be lost; the hero or magician could be 'forsaken' by his spirit or God at any time."<sup>25</sup> He also found that the development of a stratum of noble heroes coincided with the origins of a personal God of Heaven and that the origins of imperial power, the thought of the emperor as the God of Heaven's son, and the sacrifices of princes to their ancestors and of

---

21. Weber, The Religion of China, pp. 65-6.

22. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 30.

23. Weber, Economy and Society, p.400.

24. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 30.

25. Ibid., p. 30.

heads of households to the ancestral spirits of their kin groups were connected.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, Weber had concluded that with the founding of the empire charisma had been transformed from a quality that could be lost at any time to one transmitted by heredity. Were the noble families then part of the status order that the founding of the empire established? Here was another question to ponder.

Not until Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der Verstehenden Soziologie was published posthumously with the manuscripts structure as Weber had intended it to be in 1956, and then in English as Economy and Society 1968,<sup>27</sup> do we learn why Weber wished to avoid the idealization of any one culture's peculiarities, particularly his own and how he continued to generate understanding (the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge) at certain critical points throughout the series without succumbing to the danger of offering a rationalistic interpretation when one is out of place.

### 3. Knowledge of the Limits of Science and of Empirical Science in Particular

In 1904 Weber admitted that ignorance represents the one ideal that scientists did not invent but to which scientists must adhere for the sake of maintaining the integrity of the

---

26. Ibid., p. 22.

27. Weber, Economy and Society. p.xxix.

sphere of scientific activity. Specifically, we will not know the actual interconnection of things.<sup>28</sup> The ancient Chinese hero, who asked what if, conceded momentarily and at least 4,000 years ago the ignorance we are forced to endure as human beings. Nevertheless, what Weber did not know and could not have predicted are the consequences of his own use of words to preserve the definition of the scope of the various sciences that he had been weaned on. He left implicit the choice that follows from accepting the limitation that "it is not the actual interconnection of things that defines the scope of the various sciences."<sup>29</sup> He also left implicit the fact that he was personally convinced (unlike some of us) that scientists should not concern themselves with things which are capable of being ascertained 'independently' (i.e., independent of the mind) but with understanding i.e., with the sort of knowledge which cannot be grasped without an idea. From Max Weber's own perspective, understanding was not merely the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge; it was to be for him the limit of knowledge in the natural and the social sciences that he was willing to accept and which he was committed to extending.

Weber, however, was the product of a civilization that took for granted the possibility of attributing causality to phenomena

---

28. Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science," in The Methodology of the Social Sciences, translated by Edward Shils & Henry Finch, (New York: The Free Press, 1949) p. 68. See also "An Outline of Max Weber's Sociology of Science," by Robyn A. Goldstein (unpublished).

29. Ibid., p.68.

in human experience.<sup>30</sup> He had an interest in making the conviction that he shared with his contemporaries explicit and in destroying those dogmatic beliefs that made understanding impossible to achieve. Weber also knew from personal experience that such an achievement (while necessary) was not a sufficient condition of the mental state of being convinced that sociology is a science which can contribute to the causal explanation of phenomena that are important historically and culturally.<sup>31</sup>

Weber was aware of the expectation that scientists generate ideals in the age of subjectivist culture into which he was born. In the essay "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," published in 1915, Weber went so far as to acknowledge in principle that

the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a "meaning" of inner-

---

30. See Weber's Economy and Society, p. 400, for the context within which Weber discusses this notion. The context is magical thinking. For it is "only we," Weber wrote, "judging from the standpoint of our modern views of nature, can distinguish objectively in such behavior those attributions of causality which are 'correct' from those which are 'fallacious,' and then designate the fallacious attributions of causality as irrational, and the corresponding acts as 'magic.' Was Weber then suggesting the unthinkable: that magical thinking was rampant in the thoughts of his contemporaries? The author will leave the reader to decide on the basis of the evidence that Weber offers. See Max Weber, Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics, translated by Guy Oakes (New York: The Free Press, 1975) and Max Weber, Critique of Stammler, translated by Guy Oakes (New York: The Free Press, 1977).

31. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 20.

worldly occurrences.<sup>32</sup>

Weber knew only one way to convince his contemporaries, as he was convinced, of the fact that an intellectual approach that asks for understanding is one that does not try to impose a meaning on events. For the aim of this approach is to yield knowledge which claims a certain validity as empirical truth. The way is to let the reader know how, in fact, one comes to such knowledge. In that way his work would speak for itself. Weber's approach seemed to work for him. That his contemporaries (including perhaps his closest personal associate) did not seem to understand his intellectual achievement of raising empirical sociology to the level of a science is somewhat bewildering but perhaps understandable in terms of certain intellectual commitments which they were unwilling to forgo.<sup>33</sup> That his

---

32. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," p. 351.

33. See Albert Salomon, "Max Weber's Methodology," in Social Research, volume 1, May 1934. Karl Jaspers, for instance, was not only suspicious of his contemporaries overconfidence in natural science. He also believed that the irrational serves as an antidote to the external havoc that reason wreaks. In this context, we can understand Jaspers insistence upon Max Weber's being primarily a philosopher, as Salomon reports "in fact the only philosopher of his age. Provided the term be understood in the sense in which it was used by the pre-Socratic schools in Greece, as the man who is swayed by an inner compulsion to grasp the meaning of life and to impart this secret to his fellow citizens, then Weber was unquestionably a philosopher: akin in spirit to the cryptic Heraclitus." Jaspers could not conceive of an effort to understand the actual circumstances under which human beings are swayed by an inner compulsion to attach a certain meaning to what they do and to how they live that did not also seek to impart meaning. Jaspers was opposed to the idea of life

achievement has gone virtually unnoticed in the English-speaking world requires more of a clarification.

For we are the product of a world where the prevailing orientation in the sciences has been toward objects. Possibly since Newton,<sup>34</sup> the prevailing wisdom has been that a theory denotes the interrelation of things. Until recently, this approach has dominated thinking most in the social and natural sciences (including the writing of history and American sociology, particularly where Max Weber is concerned).<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. Knowledge of Max Weber's Achievement of Raising Empirical Sociology to the Level of a Science

No doubt Vatro Murvar was correct in his appraisals both of

---

being meaningless. Jaspers was unwilling to abandon his faith for long enough to grasp the significance of Max Weber's accomplishment. For a discussion of the philosophy of Karl Jaspers, see Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

34. See Robert A. Nisbet, The Sociological Tradition, (New York, Basic Books); p. 20, Robert King Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York, The Free Press) pp. 27, 28, 662, 674-678.
35. See Alvin Gouldner, The Coming Crisis of American Sociology (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 40, 44, 148, 150, 179, 180, 188, 264, 285, Peter Blau, On the Nature of Organizations, (New York: John Wiley & Sons 1974), pp. 3, 18, 23, 24, 30-36, 37-57, 71, 76, 112, 122-126, 128, 144, 222-224, 244-248, 301, 340; Robert King Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York, The Free Press, 1968), pp. 4, 6, 28-29, 35-36, 68, 437, 472, 516, 533, 545, Anthony Giddens, Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1982), pp. 40-41.

the way Max Weber has been portrayed and of the current situation of thinking about Weber's legacy.<sup>36</sup> He writes,

Max Weber (1864-1920) is generally recognized as one of the major figures in sociological, political and economic theory. Comparisons of his intellectual and scientific legacy with the thought of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, Tocqueville, and Keynes are commonplace.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps Marion Levy was not wholly convinced that in The Religion of China

Weber attempted a staggering task....He attempted to use all the works of the sinologists available to him, to select from that material those observations that bore on his problem, and to show their interrelations as part of social structure.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly Talcott Parsons seems certain that only one type of knowledge constitutes "science" in the sense in which his study of The Structure of Social Action is interested.<sup>39</sup>

And certainly Joseph Benschman was paying homage to his teacher and friend Hans Gerth in mentioning that

he brought German sociology, especially Max Weber's sociology, to the United States and more than any one person educated American sociologists to the

- 
36. Vatro Murvar, Max Weber Today (Wisconsin: Max Weber Colloquia and Symposia at The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1983), p. 1.
37. Ibid., p.1.
38. Marion J. Levy, Jr., book review of The Religion of China, in Far Eastern Quarterly, volume xi, no.3, May 1952, p.386.
39. Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (New York: The Free Press, 1937), p. 16.

"grand tradition" of Wilhelminian and Weimar sociology. He started American sociology's second greatest industry: the interpretation of Max Weber's sociology (the interpretation of Karl Marx's sociology is the first).<sup>40</sup>

Suppose, however, that Max Weber indeed contributed to the causal explanation of phenomena that are important culturally and historically. What if Weber was the first to demonstrate what sociology "alone can do"<sup>41</sup> by pursuing "new problems" with "new methods" and thereby discovering truths "which open up significant new points of view?"<sup>42</sup> What if Max Weber's mission was to raise empirical sociology to the level of a science and that mission was accomplished? For Weber's own words were that "We can accomplish something which is never attainable in the natural sciences, namely the subjective understanding of the action of the component individuals."<sup>43</sup> What if Joseph Bensman actually had realized this but chose to leave the knowledge implicit in his remarks? And finally what if Weber, in the course of demonstrating how ideas become effective forces in history, specifically demonstrated, in the case of China, the part that material factors, knowledge, and reasoning had in the process?

---

40. Joseph Bensman, "Hans Gerth's Contribution to American Sociology," in Politics, Character, and Culture: Perspectives from Hans Gerth, edited by Joseph Bensman, Arthur Vidich, and Nobuko Gerth (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 223- 24.

41. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 15-17.

42. Weber, "'Objectivity' In Social Science," From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 68.

43. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 15.

It would seem then that sociologists, economists, and political scientists generally have been misleading their readers when they portray Weber as a figure in theory when what actually was yielded by his work as an empirical scientist was "knowledge." Moreover, in thinking of Weber's intellectual and scientific legacy as comparable to those great social thinkers that came before him, they have denied Weber the deserved privilege of being referred to as the founder of empirical sociology.

Levy, a former student of Talcott Parsons, read The Structure of Social Action without questioning whether or not science in the sense that Parsons claimed the study discussed science in Weber's sense as well. Levy assumed that Parsons had Weber specifically in mind when he wrote that

it is possible to have scattered and unintegrated bits of knowledge, and to assent to the "truth" of further scattered bits as they are called to one's attention. This type of knowledge does not, however, constitute "science" in the sense in which this study is interested in it. The latter is present only in so far as these bits of knowledge have become integrated with reference to fairly clear-cut theoretical systems.<sup>44</sup>

Reading the English translation of Confucianism and Taoism (which Hans Gerth renamed The Religion of China from that standpoint, Levy concluded that (1) Weber gathered all the works of sinologists available to him on the subject of The Religion of China for possible use, (2) Weber treated these works as a body

---

<sup>44</sup>. Parsons, The Structure of Social Action, p.16.

of material from which to select the observations that bore on his problem (which Levy believed was to test the hypothesis that the Chinese structure had all the factors favorable to the development of the form of capitalism peculiar to the West save the religious, (3) Weber showed how these bits of knowledge are interrelated and, hence, integrate into the structure of a social system, and that (4) Weber had faith in the principle of science whereby if the theory is ultimately true then all the data should be capable of being integrated with reference to it. As it seems, Levy considered Weber's failure to settle on a particular period of Chinese history to be "the most serious drawback" of the work not because Levy disagreed with Parson's reckoning that Weber conceived of a theory of the "classical" Chinese social system "roughly since the consolidation of the empire down to quite recent times,"<sup>45</sup> but because Levy thought that this implied that the Chinese system had not changed at all. And from Levy's standpoint, Weber did not have sufficient materials available to determine if the so-called Chinese system remained stable or not. Specifically, Levy knew that the pre-Sung Dynasty and post-Sung Dynasty interpretations of the Classics differ. Levy also believed that Weber not only "was bound by the sources as he found them," and was forced to adopt the method of taking remarks on a particular subject "where he found them and combine them with remarks on related patterns from the periods that were

---

45. Levy, Jr., book review, The Religion of China, pp. 386-89.

available" in order to compensate for the fact that "no one period of Chinese history had been systematically worked through in his day."<sup>46</sup> Thus, we can understand why Levy concluded that

a modern sinologist is extremely uneasy as he reads this volume- not because he knows it to be wrong but rather because he is acutely aware of the fact that in many respects he does not have adequate materials to know whether it is valid or not and because he is also aware of the serious difficulties involved in this combination of material from or about different periods.<sup>47</sup>

Levy was uneasy with not being able to tell if the lack of change in the so-called Chinese system was due to the method Weber employed or to the equilibrium state of the system itself.

In any case, what Levy's reading of the Religion of China overlooked are Weber's actual accomplishments. (1) Weber did not regard the works of sinologists available to him as sources of observations. Weber read the translations of writings available to him critically in an attempt to assess their merits for himself, since they were oftentimes at the center of a debate. (2) Weber did not have a single problem in mind. His central problem, admittedly, was to explain why the scientific, the artistic, the political, and the economic development in China did not follow the same path of rationalization unique to the West. In effect, Weber was not interested in testing a hypothesis, but in explaining why Chinese cultural development took a different turn. And, as it seems, his finding that the

---

46. Ibid., pp. 386-89.

47. Ibid., pp. 386-89.

split between theoretical and practical knowledge did not occur in China as it had elsewhere was an important piece of the puzzle. (3) Weber was not interested in showing the interrelation of bits of knowledge but in explaining, wherever possible, the the motivation behind certain cultural developments (including his own development of the empirical science of sociology to the point where he decided to study the origins of Chinese culture).<sup>48</sup> (4) As Weber himself knew from having experienced the sense of personal accomplishment that comes with making a correct conjecture at a certain point in a passage with the solution of one problem there arise new problems, a process that continues until the questions raised by one's own accomplishments make it possible for others to advance further. This is the way that an empirical science progresses. This also is the way Weber reached the conclusion that Chinese thought represents an unbroken unity and the way the author came to understand what Weber actually was referring to when he made the statement. In effect, Weber's approach to generating knowledge stands opposed in principle to the idea that ultimate truths are possible. Weber aimed not for ultimate truths but for empirical knowledge of what caused certain phenomena to appear in Western civilization only. In the process, he found out that it was necessary to explain the peculiar unity that Chinese thought represented.

Thus, had Levy studied Weber's writings on China from the standpoint of trying to determine the meaning and significance

---

48. Max Weber, The Religion of India.

that Weber attached to them, he would have realized that Weber's conception of science, and in particular of sociology, was not his own. Weber was not interested in corroborating a theory, as Levy believed. Weber, unlike Parsons, could not conceive of a theory that integrates facts and that is true in some ultimate sense. Perhaps then in taking up the question of what constitutes science in the sense in which The Structure of Social Action "is interested in it," Parsons was making known the presence within his theoretical endeavor of residual "bits of knowledge" which he was unable to integrate with reference to the system whose presence was inferred and that would not constitute "scientific" knowledge in the sense in which he personally was committed. This would explain why Parsons merely reported that

as has been pointed out, Weber is interested in systems of religious ideas as differentiating elements in social development. Underlying this interest is his basic thesis that the process of religious rationalization is not predetermined by its immanent nature in one particular direction, but that it can proceed in a limited number of possible directions according to various circumstances. Though the subtypes are numerous, the major directions can be reduced to two- a dualism, which runs through all of Weber's work on this subject.<sup>49</sup>

Given the clear parameters of Parsons' interest in science, he had no reason to try to grasp the significance of this finding. Moreover, as it seems, Parsons had difficulty admitting that the credit for making such a discovery belonged to H. Grab

---

49. Parsons, The Structure of Social Actions, p.567.

as can only be inferred from a translator's note tucked away within the Notes to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism:

(This process <the rejection of sacramental magic as a road to salvation> is for Weber one of the most important aspects of the broader process of rationalization in which he sums up his philosophy of history. See various parts of **Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft** and H. Grab, **Der Begriff des Rationalen bei Max Weber.**- Translator's Note)<sup>50</sup>

Apparently Parsons learned from Grab, and himself believed that Weber considered the process of disenchantment to be the most important aspect of the process of rationalization. But as I have learned in the course of writing this dissertation, Weber did not find the process of disenchantment to be the only important aspect of the process of rationalization, nor was rationalization the only process with which Weber needed to be concerned. And only because Weber personally made the choice of what was to be his philosophy of science may his findings (at all) be summed up as a philosophy of history.

Thus, it is no accident that Marion Levy did not relate to the actual meaning that Max Weber attached to his own words and had no idea of what Weber had accomplished in writing Confucianism and Taoism or that C. K. Yang, in seeking to make a comprehensive statement as to what Weber had accomplished in the series of studies to which the newly named The Religion of China belonged, refers to a passage from The Structure of Social

---

50. "Notes," in Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, pp. 222-23.

Action.<sup>51</sup> Within certain circles<sup>52</sup> of American sociologists in the 1950's the consensus was (and still is today)<sup>53</sup> that Parsons is entitled not only to the last word on Max Weber, but also, with regard to the essay on China, to the first word because he addressed himself specifically to the subject before any other sociologist in the English-speaking world.

- 
51. Weber, The Religion of China, p. xviii. According to Yang, Weber undertook an ambitious series of comparative studies all directed the question, why did modern rational bourgeois capitalism appear as a dominant phenomenon only in the modern West? What are the differentiating factors that account for its failure to appear in other cultures? The comparative study is couched mainly in terms of the Marxian dichotomy of "material" and "ideal" factors. The general upshot is the thesis that at relevant stages in the development of cultures the material conditions in China, India, Judea compared favorably, from the point of view of capitalist-bureaucratic potentialities, with those of our own medieval and modern times, while in each culture the "economic ethic" of the dominant religious tradition concerned was directly antagonistic to such a development. On the other hand, in Protestant (to a less extent in Christianity as a whole) the economic ethic was directly favorable. This conclusion confirms the functional relationship between Protestantism and capitalism."
52. See Robert King Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 250.
53. It is ironic that the theoretical system that Parsons created for the purpose of synthesizing to the extent possible the works of Weber, Durkheim, and others is not regarded as Parsons' but as the perspective that Marx, Weber, and Durkheim have in common with Parson s himself. Writes Alan Dawe, "In the end, in Marx, in Weber, in Durkheim, in Parsons, it is always systems which act, disembodied systems torn from their roots in the human agency which created them." See Alan Dawe, "Theories of Social Action," in A History of Sociological Analysis, edited by Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet (New York; Basic Books, 1978), p. 408.

5. Knowledge of Joseph Bensman's Contribution  
to American Sociology

Joseph Bensman knew that both Parsons and Salomon bear a certain amount of responsibility for the ignorance of Weber that exists today in the English speaking world. Yet, Bensman represented his teacher Hans Gerth as the founder of sociology's second greatest industry, apparently because he found Gerth's influence to be decisive. Although Albert Salomon wrote three articles on Weber which were published in *Social Research* between 1934 and 1935, Bensman noticed that

Salomon had dropped his emphasis after the appearance of Talcott Parsons' **Structure of Social Action**, which contained four chapters on Weber. Previously in 1930, Parsons had translated the **Protestant Ethic** into English, and Frank Knight had translated **General Economic History**. But the Weber "industry" really began with **From Max Weber**, which appeared in 1946. One year after Gerth and Mills published **From Max Weber**, Parsons and Henderson translated the first part of Weber's **Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft** under the title **The Theory of Social and Economic Organization**.<sup>54</sup>

Bensman had concluded that the "Weber industry" did not actually begin with Salomon's three articles, with Parsons' Structure of Social Action, or with either the Knight translation of General Economic History or Parsons' translation of The Protestant Ethic. Rather, Salomon read Weber as if he were reading Marx himself, believing that Weber, like Marx, had a

---

54. Bensman, "Hans Gerth's Contribution to American Sociology," pp. 223-24.

definite "idea of man." Wherever possible Salomon brought facts to bear on his conviction and ignored the contrary evidence. Salomon assumed that

this pathos for freedom reveals the deepest content of Max Weber's idea of man. To be a person, means to live a spiritual existence. This, in turn, signifies an indissolubility of will and spirit within the totality of man as a unit of decision.<sup>55</sup>

Armed with such a definite conviction, there was no way in which Salomon could have understood the circumstances under which religion was conceived in China or the circumstances (beginning with the arrival of the horse drawn chariot in the sixteenth century B.C.) under which the idea of freedom arose, particularly because he believed himself

In his innermost being Weber was militant and political. He was aware of all diabolical forces which political activity necessarily engendered. He recognized that all forms of military and heroic life, their feeling of honor and dignity, are irreconcilably in conflict with the radicalism of Christian ethics of brotherly love, as found in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>56</sup>

Salomon could not conceive of Weber's knowing of an instance where the feeling of honor and dignity of the hero and brotherliness were indistinguishable from one another, as was the case with the intellectual achievement of culture in China.

---

55. Albert Salomon, "Max Weber's Political Ideas," in Social Research, Volume #2, number 3, August, 1935, p. 381.

56. Ibid., p. 375.

Thus, whether or not Bensman was aware specifically of what Weber had learned about the history of Chinese culture and civilization in his course of study, is immaterial; the fact is that Bensman knew from studying Weber's writings that Weber did not have a definite idea of man when those Weber was concerned with in his studies had no definite idea of themselves. Bensman concluded that even with Salomon's insights into Weber's method, politics, and sociology; Salomon's commitment was to the industry of keeping Marx alive when he interpreted Weber in this militant and political manner. In effect, Bensman had reckoned that Salomon's reason for dropping his emphasis on Weber after the appearance of The Structure of Social Action was that he was confronted with a perspective that seemed to be more inclusive of Marx and, thereby, Weber than his own.

Bensman also had determined that Parsons was forced to treat Weber's actual achievement of knowledge as residual because it could not be reasonably integrated with reference to Parsons' own theory of The Structure of Social Action. Specifically, Parsons was interested in conveying the impression that Weber had a theory of the Chinese social system when Weber did not. In effect, Bensman was convinced that the intellectual work of interpreting Weber's sociology did not actually begin with either Parsons' translation of The Protestant Ethic or with Parsons' Structure of Social Action because in the former case Parsons was interested in reporting and in the latter case in conveying his own theory and treating Weber's knowledge as residual. Moreover,

Bensman found that Knight's interest was not in "interpreting" Weber but simply in communicating what Weber "ha(d) to say."<sup>57</sup> To be precise, Bensman concluded that neither Salomon, Parsons, nor Knight was really interested in interpreting Weber's sociology. And while Gerth made a "grand" effort interpret Weber's sociology correctly, Bensman realized that Gerth falsely attributed to Weber a vision (or philosophy) of history with "the principle of rationalization" as "the most general element."<sup>58</sup> So far as Gerth understood the principle, institutional structures rise and fall. Classes, parties, rulers have their ups and downs, and the general drift of secular rationalization is implemented in the process. Writes Gerth,

in thinking of the change of human attitudes and mentalities that this process occasions, Weber liked to quote Friedrich Schiller's phrase, the "disenchantment of the world." The extent and direction of "rationalization" is thus measured negatively in terms of the degree to which magical elements are displaced, or positively by the extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence naturalistic consistency.<sup>59</sup>

Gerth could not conceive of rationalization occasioning a revolutionary change from without whereby secular elements become irrelevant, magic is transformed into symbolic activity, and a religious notion is shorn of its empirical content (knowledge) as

---

57. Weber, General Economic History, p. xvi.

58. Gerth, "Intellectual Orientations," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 51.

59. Ibid., p.51.

was the case in China with the achievement of culture. Nor could Gerth conceive of a case of the institutionalization of magic where an accepted mode of reasoning did not imply a common direction (or drift) of rationalization, but rather expressed the pragmatic concerns of a following and a voluntary agreement, a development, by the way, in which intellectuals had no part. Gerth assumed that Weber ascribed "the urge towards a comprehensive and meaningful interpretation of the universe" not only "to groups of intellectuals," but also to the empirical scientist.<sup>60</sup> Not only does Gerth appear to be unaware of a real difference between an intellectual approach that asks for the meaning of inner worldly occurrences and one that asks for understanding (and, hence, for empirical knowledge), the latter approach being empirical and mathematical in orientation. He also was convinced that Weber's way of satisfying his own urge toward an interpretation that is both comprehensive and meaningful was by a theory of rationalization. No wonder Gerth overlooked Weber's specific reference to an "unbroken unity." Gerth assumed that the urge to attach meaning to the universe of experience and the drift of rationalization were synonymous and that a drift of rationalization implied the elimination of magic, not its preservation as was the case in ancient China. Hence, for Gerth, the idea of a continual unity in the realm of magic that involved

---

60. Ibid., pp. 51-52. Please note that in a conversation with Joseph Bensman who was both a personal friend and former student of Hans Gerth, it was indicated to me that Gerth alone wrote the introduction to From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.

thought and reasoning, but in which a drift of rationalization was not implied, would have been a contradiction in terms. Moreover, Gerth could not conceive of ideas gaining systematic coherence and consistency with the world in which men lived and worked for that implied, an intellectual situation that intellectuals did not create where the element of individual self-determination (of spontaneity, inner freedom, imagination) is non-existent. Perhaps Bensman was not specifically aware of Weber's discovery of the "unbroken unity" that Chinese thought represented. Nonetheless, Bensman knew that the acceptance of Gerth's interpretation of Weber's sociology is what has caused American sociology to remain ignorant of Weber's sociology. And this is implicit in Bensman's remarking that

since 1947 ("one year after Gerth and Mills published **From Max Weber**") the flow of books of commentary, exegesis and explication, critiques and evaluation, and biographies and biographical interpretations has been uninterrupted and undiminished. Today, attacks by Marxists and neo-Marxists and defenses of Weber by nonideological "professionals" are perhaps the central issue of contemporary sociology. More important than the mass of publications is the fact that Weber's leading concepts and ideas have become the starting point for a vast amount of historical and empirical research, as well as theoretical reflections and summations. Weber's work is central to historical, political and economic sociology, to the sociology of development and modernization, the sociology of the city and urban life, the sociology of knowledge of the arts, and of religion: it is central to epistemology

and methodology, as well as to theory proper.<sup>61</sup>

In effect, Bensman had concluded that the attacks by Marxists and Neo-Marxists were not being made against Weber but against the belief that Weber's work falls within the idealist tradition as was inferred from Gerth's interpretation of Weber's sociology. This belief should have been negated by Weber's knowledge of the part that the introduction of the horse-drawn chariot had in the founding of an empire in China, as will be demonstrated, and by Gerth's own interpretation of Weber's Freiburg Inauguration Address, as Bensman suggests. Bensman had reckoned that in the interest of sociologists continuing to read Weber, it did not matter how they interpreted or misinterpreted his work. The fact that Weber's principal concepts and ideas have become the starting point of much historical and empirical

---

61. Bensman's discussion of Max Weber and American sociology is as telling for what it includes as for what it excludes. Notice what Bensman has left out: from Columbia University, Robert MacIver, C. Wright Mills; from the New School, such supposedly New York Weberians as Hans Speier, Adolph Lowe, the late Emil Lederer, Carl Mayer, and Alfred Schutz; from Harvard, Carl Joachim Friedrich, Robert King Merton, Marion Levy, Robert Bellah, Logan Wilson, the late E. Y. Hartshorne; from University of Chicago, Edward Shils, Louis Wirth, Max Rheinstein; from University of California, Reinhard Bendix; from the University of Wisconsin, Don Martindale and also C. W. Mills. See "The Reception of Max Weber's Work in American Sociology," in Politics, Character, and Culture, edited by Joseph Bensman, Arthur Vidich, and Nobuko Gerth (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 214-15. It was indicated to me by Bernard Rosenberg that I had failed to mention Alfred Schutz. Perhaps the fact that Gerth does not refer to Schutz in his discussion of Weberians at the New School will also prove telling.

research, theoretical pondering, and summations is more important than the actual number of publications with Weber's name attached to them. Bensman also knew that this fact bears no relation to Weber's actual accomplishments or to Weber's understanding that it is not concepts or ideas, but questions that enable others to advance, which is why Bensman's subsequent remarks about the centrality of Weber's work reads as a non sequitur. While Bensman knew that "Weber's work is central to the various subdisciplines within our field, including theory proper,"<sup>62</sup> (e.g., empirical knowledge), and while Bensman conveyed his knowledge of the centrality of Weber's work to each of these spheres in the course of teaching courses in Max Weber's sociology, in political sociology, in the sociology of knowledge, in the sociology of the arts, Bensman also had determined that the mass of publications on Weber ignored the way in which Weber actually raised empirical sociology to the level of a science.<sup>63</sup> Here then is another reason why this effort to establish the foundation of Weber's claim of knowledge (or understanding) in the case of Chinese thought is important as would be an analysis of recent sinological literature to determine whether or not current knowledge of Chinese history and culture bears out Weber's

---

62. Bensman, "Hans Gerth's Contribution to American Sociology," p. 223-34.

63. Joseph Bensman loved mystery stories and I would not be surprised to learn that he asked me if I would like to write my dissertation on Weber's sociology of knowledge because he really wanted someone to solve this puzzle and knew that I could be stubborn enough to do so.

thesis. Although the latter is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I should like to mention briefly a few significant points and to include a recent photograph of a horse drawn chariot and drawings of weaponry from the Shang dynasty.

(1) Writes K.C. Chang, "In ancient China the association of flags with military units is well known, and in oracle bone inscriptions tsu are shown to be action units in military campaigns."<sup>64</sup> Apparently, the Chinese have yet to learn of the specific achievement of culture by the military organization and of what that achievement implied.

(2) The earliest radiocarbon dates available from sites of the Shang dynasty is 1590 B.C. (plus or minus 160 years).<sup>65</sup> Assuming that the empire originated with the Shang dynasty (an hypothesis that Weber's work seems to confirm), then Weber not only was able to trace (using mostly literary sources) the route of the horse drawn chariot from Mesopotamia, where it originated, to China, he also was more or less able to pinpoint its arrival.

(3) According to the physical anthropologist, K.C. Chang, among the cultural traits that Li Chi included on his list of "what distinguished the Shang from their Neolithic forebears" is the use of chariots.<sup>66</sup>

(4) There is no doubt that K.C. Chang believes "that our

---

64. Kwang-Chi Chang, Shang Civilization, (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 163.

65. Ibid., p. 323.

66. Ibid., p. 341.

knowledge concerning Shang history has been vastly enriched and expanded by new data that have been procured from An-yang."<sup>67</sup> It is unfortunate that Chang is unaware of Weber's important discovery and contribution to knowledge of Chinese history and culture which is consistent not only with the Shang dynasty being the first dynasty of China and the Hsia dynasty being merely legendary (a view that is still being debated and which Weber's achievement might help to decide). The An-yang excavations were undertaken at a time when only two attitudes towards theory were prevalent in China: "Dataism," which attempts to translate the Chinese word and to study history, and Marxism. Unfortunately, the Chinese have come to believe that with the tools provided by the natural sciences, it will be possible "to put order into all the available historical data..."<sup>68</sup> and are unaware of the possibility of knowing the order that the Chinese imposed themselves. This dissertation should help in that regard.

(5) According to Chang, "The origin of the Shang civilization is the ultimate question in the minds of many, both those who have a scholarly interest in early China and those who are simply fascinated with Shang art or by some other aspect of Shang civilization."<sup>69</sup> Weber would have disagreed with Chang's calling the question ultimate. The fact is that Weber with the tools he had developed was able to find the answer to this question and in

---

67. Ibid., p. 62.

68. Ibid., p. 60.

69. Ibid., p.335.

the process solved what was for him the important question of the circumstances under which the religious notion of common ancestry arose and the course of events that led to the founding of a civilization in the region almost 4,000 years ago.<sup>70</sup>

(6) Chang writes, "Shang religion was inextricably involved in the genesis and legitimation of the Shang state. It was believed that Ti, the high god, conferred fruitful harvest and divine assistance in battle, that the king's ancestors were able to intercede with Ti, and that the king could communicate with his ancestors."<sup>71</sup> Apparently, Chang has yet to learn specifically of the involvement of both religion and practical knowledge in the founding of the Chinese empire and, possibly, of its bearing on recent events.

Thus, there are at least five reasons for concerning ourselves today with explicating the text of Weber's writing of "an unbroken unity in the case of Chinese thought:" knowledge of the limits of empirical science; knowledge of Weber's tools, of how Weber used them, and of problems with which Weber was concerned and their conceptual interconnections; knowledge of Weber's raising empirical sociology to the level of a science and of Joseph Bense's contribution to that effort in the English speaking world; knowledge of Chinese history and culture, of the founding of an empire in China; and lastly knowledge of Weber's claim to understanding the case of Chinese thought.

---

70. Ibid., p. 335.

71. Ibid., p. 335.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE STANDPOINT OF A MODERN MAN

Max Weber was a self-proclaimed "product of 'modern' European civilization".<sup>72</sup> Admittedly, he therefore studied any problem in a universal history of culture by emphasizing those aspects of a culture that differentiate it from Western civilization.<sup>73</sup> Why then was Weber bound to inquire into the achievement of Chinese culture and into the origins of Chinese civilization?

---

72. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1958), p. 13. Weber was firmly committed to the view that "only we, judging from the standpoint of our modern views of nature" as a world of natural causes can distinguish objectively in the behavior of rubbing to elicit sparks from pieces of wood or in the mimetical actions of magicians to evoke rains from the heavens "those attributions of causality which are "correct" from those which are 'fallacious,' and then designate the fallacious attributions of causality as irrational, and the corresponding acts as 'magic.' Weber specifically elaborates his perspective only once, in Economy and Society, edited by Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich (University of California Press, 1978), on p. 400. For Weber's discussion of "the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism," see "Religious Rejections of The World and their Directions," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, edited by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). pp. 350-59.

73. Weber, The Protestaant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p.27.

It was in Weber's time that empirical<sup>74</sup> science had entered an unprecedented phase of specialization: the phase of forever remaining specialized. Both externally and inwardly (that is, in terms of the results achieved and in terms of the scientist's attitude toward what he had accomplished), matters stood at the point where the individual could obtain the sure knowledge or certainty that he had achieved something that was actually perfect within the field of science only where he was a strict

---

74. Weber's suggests that an "experience" is not "an object of empirical 'knowledge' at the moment in which it is occurring 'in me' and 'about me'." At that moment, the experience is merely an object of perception. There is a perception of the experience lasting only for a moment, of being conscious of the moment, of the experience taking place "in me" and "about me", and possibly an awareness of the difference. It is as an object of perception that the experience belongs to empirical reality. For "empirical reality", Weber indicates, "is invariably perceptual and accessible to our experience only in its concrete and individually qualitative peculiarities." Before an "experience" can become an object of empirical knowledge, the attitude-taking subject must become objective towards the experience, and that requires not only an historical evaluation of the experience but also the element of contemplation. As Weber noted, "all 'historical' evaluation includes, so to speak, a 'contemplative' element. Only then can we become objective towards the experience. For further discussion of these ideas, see Max Weber, "The Logic of the Cultural Sciences," in The Methodology of the Social Sciences, translated and edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry Finch (New York: Free Press, 1949), pp. 158, 176, and Max Weber, "Roscher's Historical Method," in Roscher and Knies, translated by Guy Oakes (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 56.

specialist.<sup>75</sup>

Weber was aware that

all work that overlaps neighboring fields, as we occasionally undertake and which sociologists must undertake again and again, is burdened with the resigned realization that at best one provides the specialist with useful questions upon which he would not so easily hit from his own specialized point of view. One's own work must inevitably remain highly imperfect.<sup>76</sup>

However, so far as he was concerned with the understanding of Western culture, inwardly matters seemed to stand at that critical point where Weber at least acquired the sure consciousness of having achieved something (however imperfect) of at least modest value where he was a strict specialist himself.<sup>77</sup>

Confucianism and Taoism was one of several essays in a series of investigations of culture. Yet, Weber did not claim for any one of them the right to be treated as a complete analysis of a culture. On the contrary, in each analysis of culture, he intentionally stressed the factors that distinguish it from Western civilization.<sup>78</sup> These studies also were specifically oriented to the **questions** which seemed important to Weber "for

---

75. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press) p. 130- 34.

76. Ibid., pp.134-135.

77. See Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 27-28.

78. Ibid., pp. 27- 28.

the understanding of Western culture"<sup>80</sup> from this specialized<sup>81</sup> point of view.<sup>82</sup> To be precise, they sought to explain how certain cultural phenomena were unique to Western civilization, phenomena which, as Weber noted, we like to think of as lying "in a line of development of universal significance and value."<sup>83</sup> Weber intended to demonstrate this point by means of a comparison with cultural developments in civilized countries elsewhere.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, it is no wonder that Weber also warned against exaggerating the importance of his investigations. Weber was not concerned about sinologists, Indologists, Semitists, or Egyptologists finding facts unknown to them; but rather with their finding something precisely wrong in those points of fact that were essential to the specific understanding of Western culture he had established. Weber was aware that as a nonspecialist he could not know how close he was to this ideal. Since he had no choice but to rely on translations and, therefore, on a specialist literature that was often at the center of a debate whose merits he was unable to assess

---

80. Ibid., pp. 27- 28.

81. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in Gerth & Mills, Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 135.

82. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, pp. 27-28.

83. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 13.

84. Ibid., pp. 13-31.

accurately,<sup>85</sup> he was obliged "to make modest claims for the value of his work."<sup>86</sup> Particularly in the case of China, the number of available translations of actual sources (e.g. inscribed works and documents) was quite small in comparison with the number of primary sources in existence at the time and that were important so far as Weber was concerned.<sup>87</sup> His studies, especially the parts that deal with Asia in particular, undoubtedly were to be considered provisional. In Weber's judgment, only the specialist was qualified to make the final judgment of the accuracy of the facts upon which these studies are based.

Yet, Weber was motivated to conduct these investigations because expert studies with the specific purpose in mind of understanding Western culture from this specialized point of view had not been made theretofore.<sup>88</sup> From Weber's standpoint, it was only by strict specialization that he could become fully aware of having accomplished something that would endure despite its

---

85. Ibid., p. 13-31

86. Ibid., p. 28.

87. Ibid. Weber admitted, for instance, that he could not describe the development of Chinese agriculture given the limited sources available to him. Apparently, he had determined that for his purposes and in the context of emphasizing those aspects of Chinese culture that differentiate it from Western civilization, he did not need to describe the development of agriculture. Yet, he knew that because sources exist does not necessarily mean that they will on the whole provide information that would be useful to him. Max Weber, The Religion of China, p. 64.

88. Ibid., p.64.

tentative quality.<sup>89</sup> As he indicated,

A (really definite and efficient achievement is today always a specialized achievement).<sup>90</sup> And whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders, so to speak, and to come up to the idea that the fate of his soul depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjecture at this passage of this manuscript may as well stay away from science. He will never have what one may call the 'personal experience' of science.<sup>91</sup>

It follows that Weber's intellectual approach could not be one which in any way asked for a meaning of inner worldly occurrences: not if "the empirical and the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which asks for a meaning of inner worldly occurrences."<sup>92</sup> Weber's intellectual approach was not to ask that a certain meaning be attached to the experiences that human

---

89. See Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", pp.134-35.

90. Translated by Robyn Goldstein and Nina Wernka. The Gerth translation reads "a really definitive and good accomplishment is today a specialized accomplishment." Ibid., pp. 134-35 But as Bernard Rosenberg pointed out to me, "Good, yes, definitive no!" I then looked at the original translation and found the following: "eine wirklich endgultige und tuchtige Leistung ist heute stets: eine spezialistisch Leiftung." The point is that "endgultige" translates as "definite," which is a far cry from "definitive," and "tuchtige" or efficient offers a clearer understanding of what good means in this instance. See Weber, "Wissenschaft Als Beruf," in Gesammalte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, JCB Mohr 1972 (Paul Siebeck) Tubingen, p. 588.

91. Ibid., pp. 134-35.

92. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 351.

beings have attached meaning and significance themselves. Rather, his intellectual approach was to ask for their "subjective understanding," which, Weber explains, "is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge."<sup>93</sup> For understanding, Weber writes, "may be of two kinds." The first is understanding by direct observation what is intended by a certain behavior. The second is understanding in terms of motive the meaning that is attached to behavior.<sup>94</sup>

Certainly Weber had experienced this strange passion for making the correct or factually accurate conjecture while writing The Religion of China, to the point of being explicit about what was and what was not possible to discuss so far as prehistoric China was concerned.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, he understood that it was not passion that determined whether or not a scientific worker like himself would produce scientific results for, as he observed,

it is a fact that no amount of such enthusiasm, however sincere and profound it may be, can compel a problem to yield scientific results. Certainly enthusiasm is a prerequisite of the 'inspiration'<sup>96</sup> which is decisive....And such

- 
93. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 15.
94. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 5. It is to be noted that the very concept of a "social relationship," in Weber's sense, presupposes that an "understanding" or knowledge exists among the parties.
95. Weber, The Religion of China, passim.
96. There is here implied the individual's capacity to be creative in organizing material. In science, unlike in art, the idea must stand the test of correctness in terms of the facts.

intuition cannot be forced. It has nothing to do with any cold calculation.<sup>97</sup>

Calculation surely was a necessary prerequisite. For if Weber wanted to figure something out, he knew that he had to make thousands of quite trivial computations<sup>98</sup> and could in no way transfer this task to assistants no matter how insignificant the final result. Age (and the experience which age presupposes) did not exempt him of this requirement.

Only because Weber had a valuable idea of his own about where his computations were leading and the bearing of each result upon the direction he had taken overall could scientific results have been produced.<sup>99</sup> His idea was simply to make "a contribution to the understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history."<sup>100</sup> More precisely, it was to "scientifically" instruct those who had been blinded by their faith in the 'naive' doctrine of historical materialism<sup>101</sup> (that

---

97. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 135.

98. Computation is used here in the sense of the result of the act or process of computing, of determining by calculation, of estimating as in Weber's estimating that the horse-drawn chariot arrived in China in the sixteenth century B.C. Webster's New International Dictionary, p. 551. We have no reason to doubt that this also was Weber's use of the term.

99. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 135.

100. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 90.

101. Max Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p. 37. Writes Weber, Auf di Vorstellung des naiven Geschichtsmaterialismus, dab derartige << Ideen << als << Widerspiegelung << oder>>

"such ideas reflect back or constitute the superstructure of the economic situation"<sup>102</sup>) to the historical truth that religious ideas "simply cannot be deduced from economic circumstances"<sup>103</sup> for "they contain a law of development and a compelling force"<sup>104</sup> entirely their own. Writes Weber,

the modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national character which they deserve.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, in nobler terms, his idea was to be the modern man to demonstrate the significance that religious ideas have had for culture and for national character. His aim was not "to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one sided spiritualistic interpretation of culture and of history"<sup>106</sup> but

---

Ueberon << okonomischer situationen ins leben treten, werden wir eingehender eist spater zu sprechen hommen." The Parsons translation of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism reads "concerning the doctrine of the more naive historical materialism, that such ideas originate as a reflection or superstructure of economic situations..." p. 55. Notice Parson's effort to relativize Weber's judgment of Marx's work. Evidently, Parsons believed that Weber also was naive.

102. Ibid., p. 55.

103. Ibid., p. 277.

104. Ibid., p. 277.

105. Ibid., p. 183.

106. Ibid., p. 183.

rather to provide an interpretation that is accurate.<sup>107</sup> For each interpretation, however equally possible, may not be equally relevant to the facts at hand, and if the interpretation "does not serve as the preparation but as the conclusion of an investigation, it accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth."<sup>108</sup>

We may be assured that Max Weber was no dilettante. It was not for lack of a firm and reliable work procedure that he prepared the ideal typical constructions with a rational consistency rarely found in empirical reality. As it seems, Weber prepared these constructs in order to put himself in the position to estimate the significance that religious ideas have had for culture and for national character. Although Weber's idea must have been prepared on the soil of very hard work, as is normally the case with the specialist, he knew that it was neither work

---

107. Weber was aware of the possibility of vanity (that is, "the need personally to stand in the foreground") disturbing the scientific enterprise. Weber may or may not have been naive to think that as a rule such disturbances do not occur. The Gerth translation reads: "Vanity is a very widespread quality and perhaps nobody is entirely free of it. In academic and scholarly circles, vanity is a sort of occupational disease, but precisely with the scholar, vanity however disagreeably it may express itself is relatively harmless; in the sense that as a rule it does not disturb the scientific enterprise." For vanity does work to confuse the actual scientific enterprise with those intellectual projects that are completed in the name of science. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 116.

108. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 183.

nor enthusiasm that compelled the idea.<sup>109</sup> A scientific worker, Weber had no choice but "to take into his bargain the risk that enters into all scientific work: Does an idea occur or does it not?"<sup>110</sup>

In Weber's case, the risk was worth his having that valuable idea of his own of science that is not only "free from presuppositions (in the sense of a rejection of religious bonds"<sup>111</sup>) but of science whose presuppositions continue to be empirically confirmed in the course of doing the analysis itself.

It is a fact, Weber observed, that every historical inquiry and, consequently, every scientific inquiry,

among the objects of which are included all sorts of logical, mathematical, or other scientific knowledge, rests only on the foundation of "truth value" which we accept and which is the only possible ultimate value criterion which determines its selection and progress.<sup>112</sup>

More precisely (so far as "sociology" was his concern), it was the understanding that if social action can be explained without superhuman interventions, which an empirical explanation must eliminate, then it has to be explained in the way in which Weber attempted to do. For empirical science does not know of

---

109. Weber discussion of the dilettante may be found in "Science as a Vocation," pp. 135- 36.

110. Ibid., pp. 135-36.

111. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 147.

112. Weber, Roscher and Knies, p. 41.

either the miracle or the revelation.<sup>113</sup> If it did, writes Weber, " 'science' would not be faithful to its own 'presuppositions.'"<sup>114</sup> The believer, however, knows both.<sup>115</sup> And, as Weber indicates, science

free from (dogmatic)<sup>116</sup> presuppositions expects from him no less- and no more- than acknowledgement that if the process can be explained without those supernatural interventions, which an empirical explanation has to eliminate as causal factors, the process has to be explained the way science attempts to do. And the believer can do this without being disloyal to his faith.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, if asked, even Weber might have been willing to admit that he had a personality of his own -not because he had managed to say something in form and in content that no one else had ever said before, but because he was devoted solely to the work at hand. Had he been asked what distinguished his own work from that of the artist he might even have been tempted to quote himself on the matter. He observed how

in contrast with these preconditions which scientific work shares with art, science has a fate that profoundly distinguishes it from artistic work. Scientific work is chained to the course of progress; whereas in the realm of art there is no progress in the same sense. It is not true that the work of art of a period that has worked out new technical means, or for instance, the laws of perspective, stands artist-

---

113. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 147.

114. Ibid., p. 147.

115. Ibid., p. 147.

116. As implied in the discussion.Ibid., p. 147.

117. Ibid., p. 147.

ically higher than a work of art devoid of all knowledge of those means and laws.<sup>118</sup>

Weber knew that at some point the questions raised by his own accomplishments would enable others to advance further than he had, and so on adinfinitum. In effect, although his studies were destined to be surpassed as the number of available translations of sources was expanded, from Weber's standpoint, they were destined to be surpassed "in a much more important sense than this,"<sup>119</sup> as can be said "of all scientific work."<sup>120</sup> Scientific progress, he writes, "is a fraction, to be more precise, the essential fraction of those intellectualizing processes which we have succumbed to for millennia."<sup>121</sup> The intellectualist rationalization created by science and by technology inspired by science did not mean that those seated in the lecture hall while Weber was speaking on the subject of "science as a vocation" had any greater knowledge of the conditions of life under which they lived than did the American Indian or the Hottentot.<sup>122</sup> Rather it meant that one knew or believed that if one but wished to learn, one could acquire this knowledge at any time. Hence, principally there are no forces

---

118. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," pp. 137-41.

119. Ibid., pp. 137-41.

120. Ibid., pp. 137-41.

121. Ibid., pp. 137-41.

122. As far as I have been able to determine, nowhere does Weber specifically discuss the Hottentots of South Africa in detail.

coming into play in the world which do not have a causal explanation and which are not capable of being calculated. In principle then (so far as things are concerned), this meant that they can be mastered by calculation. In other words, the world was disenchanted. One need no longer rely upon magical means since technical instruments and calculations perform the desired service.<sup>123</sup>

Now, according to Weber, this process of disenchantment had been ongoing in Western culture for millennia. It was in the West that the tension between religion and intellectual knowledge had come to the fore. For as Weber noted,

the tension between religion and intellectual knowledge definitely comes to the fore wherever rational, empirical knowledge has consistently worked through to the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism.<sup>124</sup>

In the West science not only encountered the claims of the ethical postulate that God ordained the world to be what it was which was (a meaningfully and ethically oriented cosmos), but also it countered those claims with the claim of its own: that in principle the empirical and mathematically oriented world view is capable of developing "refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a 'meaning' of inner-worldly occurrences."<sup>125</sup>

---

123. Weber, "Science as a Vocation, pp. 137-41..

124. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," p. 350.

125. Ibid., p. 350.

In the East, however, the world of the ancients came to be enchanted with the ideas of spirits and gods in the course of achieving culture through military organization and of the giving birth to a civilization in the region of China. Evidently, from Weber's standpoint, the rejection of the least intensive way of experiencing existence as an "infinite stream of concrete events"<sup>126</sup> which possibly occurred in the military organization of the bachelor house with the introduction of the role of ancestral spirits, was not a negative attitude as was "the rejection of all naive surrender to the most intensive ways of experiencing existence, artistic and erotical."<sup>127</sup> Although it is not at all obvious, I will demonstrate Weber's understanding that such a rejection made it possible for energies to begin to flow into rational achievement that was partly intellectual. There was no empirical science in China to dispute the role of ancestral spirits in the organization of the men's house or to refute the reasoning that the emperor was the God of Heaven's.

Max Weber knew of "an unbroken unity in the realm of magic and in the purely magical conception of life"<sup>128</sup> in China. Weber

---

126. Weber, "Objectivity" In Social Science," in The Methodology of the Social Sciences, p. 84. See Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions." for a discussion of the ways one may experience existence.

127. Ibid., p. 350.

128. Weber specifically mentions that "ungebrochene Einheit gibt es da im bereich der magie und des rein der magie und des rein magischen weltbilden wie wir es in China." Weber, Gessammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p. 564. However, Gerth's

seems to have determined that this unity coincided with the birth of a civilization in the region shortly after the importation of the horse drawn chariot. To be sure, this was not the simple unity of the primitive's imagining of the world in which everything that occurred was understood to have been evoked by concrete magical forces. Weber noticed how

the unity of the primitive image of the world in which everything was concrete magic, has tended to split into rational cognition and mastery of nature, on the one hand, and into "mystic" experiences,<sup>129</sup> on the other.<sup>130</sup>

Weber apparently was of the opinion that a separation tends to occur between "theoretical" knowledge and knowledge of a "practical" sort (which is what mystical knowledge was intended

---

translation, p. 350, reads "There is a unity in the realm of magic ....Hence, Weber's understanding of the presence of an "unbroken unity" is lost. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," p. 350.

129. Mystic, orgiastic, and ecstatic experiences are extraordinary psychic states; they lead away from everyday life and from all expedient conduct. Such experiences are, therefore, deemed to be 'holy.'" Weber, "The Social Psychology of World Religions," in Gerth & Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 289. The mystic, as Weber suggests, experiences a fleeing of the world not the enjoyment of it that is indicated by the euphoria of ecstatic experiences. Ibid., pp. 326, 330.
130. Weber, "The Social Psychology of World Religions," in Gerth & Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 282.

to denote).<sup>131</sup> As it may have seemed to him, such a separation was necessary if the tension between religion and intellectual knowledge is to come to the fore.

Nonetheless, Weber's understanding was that under the exceptional circumstance of the intellectualizing and the rationalizing of the culture of the sacred military organization of the men's house in China, the split between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge did not occur. Instead, as I will show, Weber concluded that the unity of this primitive conception of the world was transformed. It gained complexity through the utilization of the abstract notion of ancestral spirits to symbolize the appropriation of property by members of the extended kin group or clan association. And despite a temporary rift in this unity caused by problems of ultimate concern that arose in connection with the use of the horse, unity

---

131. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 545. It was apparent to Weber that the contemplative mystic's achievement of rest in god and in him alone through inactivity and possibly a cessation of thought represents an organization of the emotions that promises a certain kind of knowledge. As he explained, "the unique character of mystical knowledge consists in the fact that although it becomes more incommunicable the more it is specifically mystical, it is nevertheless recognized as knowledge. For mystical knowledge is not new knowledge of any facts or doctrines, but rather the perception of an overall meaning in the world. This usage of 'knowledge' is intended wherever the terms occurs in the numerous formulations of mystics; it denotes a practical form of knowledge. Such **gnosis** is basically a "possession" of something from which there may be derived a new practical orientation to the world, and under certain circumstances even new and communicable items of knowledge."

was restored by means of a synthesis of the disparate elements.

It was at this point that magical thinking had been carried to the point of believing that the God of Heaven who presided over the heroes' paradise, had been coerced by his son, the original emperor of China. Reason not only favored the primacy of the God of Heaven who bore a rough resemblance to Zeus, but also led to a consistent crystallization of a pantheon<sup>132</sup> following systematic rational principles to some degree, as a result of the striving for order on the part of men (here a stratum of noble warriors) who were innocent to think that the God of Heaven guaranteed their transition from this world into the next.

The bitter knowledge of tragedy had been experienced.<sup>133</sup> It

- 
132. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 407- 8. According to Weber, "the emergence of a pantheon entails the specialization and characterization of various gods (and apparently spirits) as well as the allocation of constant attributes and the differentiation of their jurisdictions." In this instance, the jurisdiction of the God as Lord of Heaven, who originally was conceived as a person was distinct from spirits of the land and ancestors.
133. Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences. Translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry Finch, the Free Press (New York, 1949) p. 57 Apparently, the introduction of the image of a God of Heaven conceived as a person was not the beginning of an actual historical epoch. For as Weber explained, "the fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the **meaning** of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must be in a position to create this meaning itself. It must recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge and the highest ideals, which move us forcefully, are always formed only in the

consisted in the pragmatic insight that pure militarism, if allowed to run on as an event in nature without being consciously checked, could create the potential for a kind of struggle for which there is no resolution. Hence, although the unity was not continuous, it was continual<sup>134</sup> or, as Weber called it, "unbroken".

Apparently, in this instance, "peace" was no more than a change in the external conditions of struggle.<sup>135</sup> In Weber's terms, what was once a struggle between noble warriors "for advantages and for survival, but without a meaningful" orientation toward one another in common in terms of conflict,<sup>136</sup>

---

struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us." The existence of such an epoch would presuppose that an importance had already been attached to the individual person.

134. I owe the distinction between continual and continuous to Alfred Jones Ph.D. It was clear to me by examining the events that transpired in China that the unity to which Weber was referring was 'unbroken' in the sense of a close succession ("continual") rather than in the sense of an uninterrupted continuity ("continuous"). Dr. Jones enabled me to grasp in precise terms this difference. See Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, 1957, p. 576, for definition of "continual."
135. Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, p.27. For Weber's discussion of conflict and of the belief that social change can be analyzed in terms of the concept of "progress," which was held by many of Weber's colleagues at the time, see The Methodology of the Social Sciences, pp. 26- 47,
136. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 38- 40. Weber's translators refer to "a meaningful mutual orientation in terms of conflict." Nonetheless, we remind the reader that subjective understanding, from Weber's standpoint, refers to the activities of

was now a matter of the relative opportunities of human beings depending upon the position of their kin group (or sib) in the social order. As it seems, Weber considered such a "progression" to be important to human development, or without it, the mind would have remained undeveloped, (artless and unsophisticated).

There was "empirical" knowledge, reflection on the ultimate problems of life, and wisdom of a sort before this synthesis was forged. However, the "knowledge" was an incidental concomitant of the perceived role of ancestral spirits that resulted from the reflection of charismatic warriors. Such knowledge was unrefined and, therefore, not genuine empirical knowledge. In effect, through the perceived role of ancestral spirits, the object of empirical knowledge was joined with the subjective feeling of belonging together. However, with the rationalization of organization, the wisdom gained was lost. Through the mechanism of rationalization, the insights were deemed irrelevant. Nonetheless, at the time that the empire was born knowledge of tragedy caused the warriors to adopt an inner pragmatic attitude toward the God and by means of a syllogistic construction a kind of wisdom was preserved.<sup>137</sup> Weber was convinced that with the

---

individuals and in no way implies a group mind concept.

137. In the "Author's Introduction" to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 13, Weber refers to the most profound sort of philosophical and theological wisdom as being one of the factors that are not confined to the West. In short, Weber observed that "knowledge and observation of great refinement have existed elsewhere, above all in India, China, Babylonia, Egypt." In the case of China, Weber explains that historical scholarship was highly developed. We

achievement of culture by the ancient Chinese military organization and at the dawn of Chinese civilization, there was knowledge claiming a certain validity which he could not refute or verify as being valid except on condition of faith in ancestral spirits and in a God of Heaven and, hence, types of knowledge that an empirical science could comprehend, but that did not have the character of genuine "sociological knowledge" as such. For "when we distinguish in principle between value judgments and "empirical knowledge,"<sup>138</sup> Weber explains, "we presupposed the existence of an unconditionally valid type of knowledge in the social sciences, i.e., the analytical ordering of empirical social reality."<sup>139</sup>

A product of modern Western civilization, Max Weber would have at some point inquired into the achievement of Chinese culture and into the origins of Chinese civilization if he suspected that the standpoint of the men who achieved culture and of the men who founded a civilization in China differed from his own. With the founding of a civilization the kinship tie which had eased to exist was revived. A social order was created without the importance of the individual person being

---

will demonstrate that it was Weber's understanding that there was knowledge and wisdom (although not of the most profound sort) associated with the founding of the empire in China some seven hundred years before the importance of historical scholarship was recognized.

138. Weber, Roscher and Knies, translated by Guy Oakes, (New York, The Free Press), p. 63.

139. Ibid, p. 63.

acknowledged. The founders of Chinese civilization viewed themselves not as individual persons but as members of their kin group and as participants in a social order not really of their own making.

The civilized man at the dawn of Chinese civilization was not like the "peasant" (Abraham), the feudal landlord, the warrior hero, or the "cultivated man" who strives to perfect himself by acquiring or creating "culture values."<sup>140</sup> He could not die satisfied with life because the cycle of his existence repeated itself into infinity by virtue of his membership in the kind of association that did not ascribe any importance to the individual person. Such a civilized man was placed in the midst of the continuous stagnation of culture by ideas, knowledge, and concrete everyday problems. Hence, he could not become tired of life either. It was as if he had caught the greatest part of what the spirit brought forth and what he had seized was definitive. There was no 'culture' of the individual as such to become weary of augmenting. There was only a way of life made perfect by the establishment of the external order of the social community. Viewed in this way, "civilization" appears not to have emancipated man from the mere organic cycle of natural life but

---

140. "Culture values" is a term used by Weber. "Culture," from Weber's standpoint, refers to a limited segment of the world process upon which human beings confer meaning and value. "Culture," in effect, has a specific referent and does not represent all values.

to have harnessed him to it permanently. 141

An "empire state" was born.<sup>142</sup> And "although one might be inclined to believe that the formation as well as the expansion of Great Power structures is always and primarily determined economically"<sup>143</sup>, as Weber noted, in the case of China there is a different story to be told. According to Weber,

neither the empires of China, Persia, or Imperial Rome after its transformation from a coastal to a continental empire, were originated or maintained on the basis of a pre-existing and a particularly intensive inland traffic in goods or highly developed means of communication.<sup>144</sup>

While the individuals decisive within the empire were so through a "market," it was not a genuine market served by

141. See "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions" for Weber's discussion of the difference between the "cultivated man" and the "man of culture." p. 356.

142. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 945. Apparently, it was Weber's understanding that an "empire state" represents a situation of domination in the broader sense of power, "i.e., of the possibility of imposing one's own will upon the behaviour of other persons." He writes, that "Even without any formal power of command an 'empire state' or, more correctly, those individuals who are the decisive ones within it either through authority or through a market, can exercise a far-reaching and occasionally despotic hegemony." In this instance, however, the human beings decisive within the empire were so by virtue of marketable skills of an extraordinary nature guaranteed to them not as individuals but as leaders of charismatic sib (or clan) associations.

143. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 913-14..

144. Ibid., pp. 913-14.

capitalist interest groups. For as Weber noted,

the expansion of Persia was not in any way served by capitalist interest groups. Such groups did not exist there as motivating forces or as pace-makers, and just as little did they serve the founders of the Chinese Empire or the founders of the Carolingian Monarchy.<sup>145</sup>

Rather, it was "a market of extraordinary resources" over which the emperor, by virtue of his monopolistic position as Son of Heaven exercised a dominating influence and in which the princes as patriarchal leaders of their kin groups and the heads of households were the other major participants. Presumably, then, "capitalism" in China in the sense of an actual adjustment of economic action to a comparison of money income with money expenses grew out of this formation; for capitalism, so far as economic documents permitted Weber to judge, existed in all civilized countries of the earth, including China. Also, the bachelor house and the sib are not peculiar to China. According to Weber, "the world has known socialistic and communistic experiments of various sorts: family, religious, or military communism."<sup>146</sup> Only in China, perhaps did the world come to know of an experiment which upon the heel of its failure to eliminate the threat of anarchy "developed to an extent unknown elsewhere-

---

145. "Structures of Power," in Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 164.

146. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 23.

even in India."<sup>147</sup>

Hence, in "a universal history of culture", the central problem for us is not, from a purely economic point of view, Weber's understanding of the development of capitalist activity in China. It is, from a purely economic standpoint, Weber's understanding of the development of the sib. How did the sib become the bearer of the ancient status order? In terms of cultural history, our problem is to advance to hypothetical assumptions concerning the achievement of culture by the ancient sacred military organization of the bachelor house but also concerning the historical events that established the "external" conditions of order under which the unity of secular and religious prerogatives was to be established in China.<sup>148</sup> As sociologists, our problem is to explain why Weber himself was convinced that the unity of thinking of life and of worldly events as magically derived was unbroken specifically in the case

---

147. Weber, The Religion of India, p. 86. An analysis of the extent of the sib's development that occurred after the founding of the empire is beyond the scope of this project.

148. According to Karl Wittfogel, "In China the ruler emerges in the light of history as the supreme authority both in secular and religious matters. Whether the traditional designation, Son of Heaven, reflects an earlier belief in the sovereign's divinity, we do not know." Perhaps Wittfogel considered Weber's discussion to be merely hypothetical and not actually grounded in fact. Presumably, Wittfogel had read (for understanding) Weber's work on China. At this point, we do not know why Wittfogel ignored Weber's discussion of the founding of the empire. Karl A. Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, Yale University Press, 1957, p. 95.

of China. This study, therefore, does not claim to present a complete analysis of the beginnings of Chinese cultural development but to emphasize the common elements shared by civilizations universally. Hence, it is precisely oriented to those problems (mostly of ultimate concern) which were important for the understanding of the rudiments of Chinese culture and civilization from this specialized point of view. With this object, any procedure other than the method of comparison for understanding how certain problems, processes, and kinds of knowledge were associated with the achievement of culture and the founding of a civilization in China does not seem possible. For this, evidently, was the methodology that allowed Weber to comprehend the unbroken unity that Chinese thought represents. Moreover, in this instance, the "imaginary experiment" was the only available procedure for learning why Weber decided to investigate the presence of the bachelor house in China. But, like Weber, in order to avoid any misunderstanding we must emphasize the following limitation of our purpose.

Originally, we relied solely upon translations of Weber's work into English. Certain inconsistencies, however, became evident. Thus, without prior knowledge of German, this author began to translate those key passages word for word using several dictionaries. Unable to judge the merits of this work accurately, I also consulted with Nina Wernka, a teaching assistant at Columbia University. As it seems, we were justified in raising questions. With a few exceptions, Nina Wernka was allowed the

final judgment. To a certain extent, for reasons of expediency, I relied upon published translations, specifically where no clear indications of inconsistency existed. We assume that there remain errors which only a specialist would be competent to judge. And, of course, precisely because a study such as this conducted with this purpose and from this point of view has not been made heretofore, that the present one has been undertaken.

CHAPTER 3  
THE DECISION TO INVESTIGATE THE  
EXISTENCE OF THE BACHELOR HOUSE IN CHINA

Perhaps the experiment with military communism that was tried in China was the first of its kind to succeed in the world, if by "success" is meant having some lasting effect on the human beings who participated in it. Weber, however, could not attribute to study or research his own discovery of the effect that was achieved specifically through the military organization of the bachelor house because there were no books in which he could have found such information. Weber had reason to suspect that the art of writing did not appear in China until after irrigation had begun to pave the way for the transition from hoe culture to gardening. In the old Chinese terminology "governing" is identified with the "regulation of water" connecting the emergence of the art of writing with the administrative needs of irrigation.<sup>149</sup> Hence, Weber must have determined that the bachelor house is older than hoe culture, if the lasting effect that was achieved through the military organization of the bachelor house is culture as Weber would have us suppose.<sup>150</sup> In this context, it seems appropriate that we use the same procedure of the imaginary experiment that he often employed when no other would suffice. The procedure consists in thinking away the

---

149. Weber, The Religion of China, pp. 16, 20.

150. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24.

elements in the chain of motivation that led to Weber's deciding that the bachelor house was possibly "the most ancient form of organization in China."<sup>151</sup> The procedure also entails studying the problem of what provoked Max Weber's quest for knowledge in this particular instance, as Weber would have studied any problem in the universal history of culture. Using the procedure allows the scientific investigator to have the personal experience of employing a method of arriving at a causal judgment that is uncertain (as Weber himself was well aware and as this scientific investigator has come to understand for herself).<sup>152</sup>

Perhaps then, in principle, we ought not to address the question of what was learned in the course of studying the motives of a scientific investigator at first because the answer might be misconstrued as teleological in the sense of putting the cart before the horse, the effect before the cause. In practice, however, such a discussion helps to guide the reader toward the understanding which the author herself achieved. For in the course of studying Weber's motives in researching the existence of the bachelor house the author also discovered that an intellectual approach to knowledge must ask for understanding at certain critical points if it is to remain empirical and

---

151. Ibid., p. 87.

152. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 10. This investigator did not presume in advance that Weber's decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house was motivated by knowledge. Finding out meant that her choice of a method of arriving at a causal judgment in this particular instance was a wise one.

mathematically oriented. In this way, too, Weber was able to avoid, so far as we know, the human temptation to let vanity disturb his quest for empirical scientific knowledge in the sociological sense. In this way, too, Weber could be certain in his own mind of having achieved something that would endure, that was irrefutable, and that would allow others to advance further. In effect, what we have learned is what Weber actually meant when he wrote that "in principle, the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a 'meaning' of inner-worldly occurrences."<sup>153</sup>

Thus, for reasons that may not seem to be self-evident, we begin this investigation where Weber left off in his discussion of primitive agricultural life everywhere and his analysis of the extremes in the kinds of organization to which ideally hoe culture could be and with which typically hoe culture was, associated among primitive peoples who were known at the time of Weber's writing to be inhabiting certain parts of the world .

#### 1. The Extremes of Primitive Organization

The so-called hoe culture dominates primitive agricultural life everywhere. No plows and no beasts of burden aid in tillage.<sup>154</sup> As Weber indicates, the implement that is used is a pointed stick "with which the man moves about over the land

---

<sup>153</sup>. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions," p. 351.

<sup>154</sup>. Weber, General Economic History, p. 36.

making the holes into which the woman drops the seed."<sup>155</sup>

It is not that the working together of the man and the woman is "purely instinctive and mechanical."<sup>156</sup> The fact that at this early stage of human social differentiation the man and the woman are performing technically different types of services in the interest of production (instead of merely instinctively and reactively searching for food) is not necessarily an indication of an orientation to economic considerations,<sup>157</sup> but it is sufficient to warrant the investigator's supposing that the meaning of their activity lies in the achievement of a coordinated result ulterior to it. Hence, in that sense culture purportedly exists.<sup>158</sup> For "culture", writes Weber, "is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a

---

155. Ibid., p.36

156. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 15. According to Weber, many animals "understand" the commands, the anger, the love, and the hostility that human beings express, "and react to them in ways which are evidently often by no means purely instinctive and mechanical and in some sense both consciously meaningful and affected by experience." Yet, these animals do not 'experience' these feelings and wants independent of human contact. Thus, even though Weber thought that "in a way our ability to share the feelings of primitive men is not very much greater," his understanding was that we can actually share the feelings of primitive men without direct contact with them by virtue of our capacity to experience such feelings and wants ourselves.

157. Ibid., pp. 16-17, 114-20.

158. For a discussion of the central ideas discussed here, see Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 16, 63-66, 114-120.

segment on which human beings confer meaning and significance."<sup>159</sup> In the absence of a verifiable conception of their state of mind, however, from Weber's standpoint there would be no way of confirming the actual existence of culture as such.

It is significant that Weber noted how biological analogies might be useful in throwing light

on the question of the relative role in the earliest stages of human social differentiation of mechanical and instinctive factors, as compared with that of factors which are accessible to subjective interpretation generally, and more particularly to the role of consciously rational action.<sup>160</sup>

Weber realized not only that it is useless to try to throw light on this question by observing the process of human social differentiation by itself, but also that at such an early stage of human social development, where the man and the woman are performing technically different functions, it would be impossible to differentiate these factors from one another. In effect, Weber was convinced that

it is necessary for the sociologist to be thoroughly aware of the fact that in the early stages even of human development, the first set of factors is completely predominant.<sup>161</sup>

He also knew that such an awareness represents the limit to the 'understanding' of the earliest stages of human social

---

159. Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, p. 81.

160. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 17.

161. Ibid., p. 17.

development that an empirical sociologist might have. Thus, while culture purportedly exists, genuine grounds for a sociological investigation do not. As Weber explained it,

even a socialistic economy would have to be understood sociologically exactly in the same kind of "individualistic" terms<sup>162</sup> as would be the case with a system of free exchange analyzed in terms of the theory of marginal utility or a "better," but in this respect similar theory. The real empirical sociological investigation begins with the question: What motives determine and lead the individual members and participants in this socialistic community to behave in such a way that the community comes into being in the first place and that it continues to exist.<sup>163</sup>

Weber acknowledged that very different forms of 'organization' may be associated with the method of using the hoe.<sup>164</sup> For instance, he noted that

---

162. By "individualistic terms" Weber meant to suggest a way of identifying the individual participants by what they do and by their actions. See Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 17-18.

163. Ibid., p.18.

164. Weber, General Economic History, p. 36. Note that in Weber's terms, "a social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders will be called an organization (Verband) when its regulations are enforced by specific individuals: a chief and, possibly, an administrative staff, which normally also has representative powers." It is sufficient, Weber adds, "for there to be a person or persons in 'authority' whose actions are concerned with carrying into effect the order governing the organization." Weber, Economy and Society, p. 48-9. Elsewhere Weber defines an organization as "a circle of people who are accustomed to obedience to the orders of leaders and who also have a personal interest in the continuance of the domination by virtue of their own participation and the resulting

among the Guatos in the interior of Brazil, individual economy is found with no reason for assuming the previous existence of an other organization. Every household is self-sufficient with limited specialization among the members of the household and also with limited exchange relations between tribes.<sup>165</sup>

At the opposite extreme, Weber observed that agricultural work is assembled at a large central dwelling place, "as in the long-house of the Iroquois"<sup>166</sup> where the women, like cows, "are herded together under the leadership of a head woman."<sup>167</sup> She divides both work and product among the separate families. In

---

benefits, have divided among themselves the exercise of those functions which will serve the continuation of the domination and are holding themselves continuously ready for their exercise. (This is what is meant by 'organization.')

Weber, however, adds that "those leaders who do not derive from grant by others the powers of command claimed and exercised by them, we shall call **masters**; while the terms **apparatus** shall mean the circle of those persons who are holding themselves at the disposal of the master or masters in the manner just defined." Thus, it seems that in the former definition the emphasis is on the tenuous process of action not merely being oriented to an order but specifically being engaged in its enforcement (a process which at any moment "exists only so far as there is a probability that certain persons will act in such a way to carry out the order governing the organization"). In the latter definition, it seems that the defining criterion of an "organization" is the presence of the kind of structure of domination in which both master and apparatus are implicated. Ibid., p.952.

165. Weber, General Economic History, p. 36.

166. Ibid. p. 36.

167. Ibid. p. 36.

other words, no household is sufficient unto itself. The man (who is both warrior and hunter) shoulders the heavy burden of clearing the land, putting up the house, and herding cattle. Weber explains that among the Iroquois the work of taming the herd was held in high esteem because of the strength and skill it required.<sup>168</sup> Later, writes Weber, "the esteem in which it is held is traditional and customary."<sup>169</sup>

Weber found conditions similar to those found among the Iroquois in all parts of the world, and everywhere he found them (particularly among "negro" tribes),<sup>170</sup> "field work falls to the women."<sup>171</sup> The men are absent, but not for reasons of an everyday economic sort. Rather, at this extreme in the form of organization associated with hoe use, it seems Weber could not avoid thinking that the man's absence might be caused by the existence of the bachelor house<sup>172</sup> as a kind of barracks where the able-bodied warriors divided into age groups are permanently

---

168. Ibid. p. 36.

169. Ibid. p. 36.

170. Weber's specific reference to "negro tribes" rather than African tribes apparently was intended to suggest a "race identity" by which he meant "common inherited and inheritable traits that actually derive from common descent." For a very interesting and provocative discussion of the process whereby "race" creates a "group" see Chapter V, "Ethnic Groups" in Economy and Society.

171. Weber, General Economic History, p. 36..

172. Note that the German word "Mannerhaus" has been variously translated by Gerth as bachelor house and long house.

housed and, hence, is the result of developments that stem from militarism becoming the standard of operations in the organizing of hunting and war expeditions.<sup>171</sup>

Having taken the economic state of living primitive peoples at the lowest level of tool development known (the use of the hoe), and having both treated it and analyzed it as the most primitive, Weber determined that

there is no scientific justification for concluding from observations of living primitive peoples on a low technological level that the economic organization of all peoples of the past with similar technological standing has been the same as, for instance, that of the Vedda or of certain tribes of the Amazon regions.<sup>172</sup>

In the process, he discovered that there was a scientifically "legitimate" basis for concluding from observations of living primitive peoples that it is at least conceivable that there were primitive communities in the past in various regions of the world where the military organization of the men's house preceded all other forms of organization. Nonetheless, without a particular scientific justification for concluding from observations that the bachelor house is the most ancient form of organization in the region and that it was present in China before any other form of economic organization<sup>173</sup> was constituted, there would be no

---

171. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 904- 7, 1118.

172. Ibid., p. 70.

173. Central to Max Weber's general definition of an organization is the concept of an order. Weber noted that "the economic order is for us merely the way in which economic goods and services are

reason to begin an actual sociological investigation to determine the motives for which this type of organization was established. Moreover, unless there was a scientific basis for concluding from observations that Max Weber himself was aware of the possibility of his investigation leading toward the understanding that there was an unbroken unity in the specific instance of Chinese thought, we would have no reason to initiate this discussion. Did a scientific justification exist in Weber's mind or in the author's own?

## 2. Current Scientific Thinking

Current in scientific discussion at the time Weber was writing was the portrayal of primitive economic life in terms of a scheme of three stages: hunting economy, pastoral economy, and agriculture.<sup>174</sup> Weber found the scheme untenable.

---

distributed and used." Thus, it seems that by economic organization in the most general sense Weber meant an organization whose members share a conscious primary orientation to the distribution and use of economic goods and services. Max Weber "Class, Status, Party" in Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 181.

174. Apparently, the same distinction is being made today with the addition of the industrial and the postindustrial forms. See Ian Robertson, Sociology, (New York: Worth Publishers, 1987), pp. 101-10. According to Robertson, for instance, "industrial society is one relying for its subsistence primarily on mechanized production." An industrial society depends for its survival upon scientific knowledge being applied to technological production. It is implied that post industrial society, by contrast, "values theoretical knowledge and technical efficiency" as ends in themselves. Thus, it is suggested that neither practical knowledge nor theoretical knowledge is of particular importance to the earlier societal forms. Perhaps Weber would have attributed such metaphysical

Although Weber was not certain of ever having encountered either purely hunting or purely nomadic peoples, it was clear to him that neither grouping is primitive or could be free from dependence upon exchange relations with other peoples like themselves and with agricultural tribes. Weber had determined that "the primitive condition of economic life is one of nomadic agriculture on the level of hoe culture and generally associated with hunting."<sup>175</sup>

Hoe culture is farming without domesticated animals and particularly without work animals. The plow marks the transition to agriculture in Weber's sense.<sup>176</sup> What is a plow? The plow, writes Weber,

is universally, to begin with, a hoe-like instrument wielded by the hands or drawn by animals which merely scratches the soil and makes grooves in the surface.<sup>177</sup> All peoples

---

and esoteric speculations to the naive hopes or wishes of those who would prefer to believe that rational knowledge is a particularly modern phenomenon unknown to primitive hunting and gathering, pastoral, and agricultural societies. See Max Weber, Ancient Judaism, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (New York: The Free Press, 1952), p. 399, for a discussion of similar speculation amongst the Jews of ancient times. See also Robertson, Sociology, pp. 660, 107- 9.

175. Weber, General Economic History, p. 45.

176. Ibid. p. 45.

177. Although the plow is similar to the hoe, there was, in Weber's estimation, an important difference between them. With the plow, heavy labor is possible. See page 46 in General Economic History. The shapes of the plow and the hoe

which did not get beyond this hoe-plow were compelled to plow the fields back and forth in order to loosen up the soil.<sup>178</sup>

Weber admits that he was unable to describe the development of Chinese agriculture because the sources available to the non-sinologist were limited.<sup>179</sup> Yet, he did discuss the magical quality that originally was attributed to heroic strength in China. Apparently, the resources which Weber had at hand allowed him to do so.<sup>180</sup> In a footnote placed at this juncture, Weber recognized the impossibility of distinguishing "strictly between 'charm' and non-charm in the world of pre-animist and animist ideas"<sup>181</sup> and points out that "even ploughing, or any other ordinary act which was a means to an end was 'magic' in the sense of taking into service specific 'forces' (later on 'spirits')." <sup>182</sup> Perhaps then Weber also had determined, from the evidence that was available to him, that the plow was in use in China and, hence, the transition to agriculture had occurred before the process of abstraction had been carried to the point of believing that spirits were responsible for the yield that

---

are similar, but the hoe was made of sticks of wood and the plow of a more durable substance that could withstand the tugs of work animals.

178. Weber, General Economic History, p. 23.

179. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 64.

180. Ibid., p.30.

181. Ibid., p. 260-1.

182. Ibid., p. 260-1.

resulted.<sup>183</sup> At this point, we may assume that Weber had worked out the details of the transition from pre-animistic naturalism to symbolism in China to the point of being able to specify in relative terms when the idea arose that behind the harvest there was a spiritual power expressing itself. In this way it follows, logically, that Weber must have considered Chinese agriculture even though he could not possibly describe its development. In fact, following Weber's admission that for lack of the appropriate resources he was incapable of determining how Chinese agriculture arose, he commented in a footnote that

It is not possible to discuss prehistoric China here, particularly the original nomadism which has been supposed by sinologists. Naturally, the nomadic peoples of inner Asia repeatedly invaded and conquered the river plains even in prehistoric times. (Only the Mongols had for a time seriously prepared to maintain their nomadic way of life as against the superior culture of agriculturalists by prohibiting land cultivation within a determined radius of the capital. The pleasure of consuming milk, however, remained alien to the Chinese who as far as they were concerned were superior. This speaks more clearly than any tradition for the continuity of the very old hoe and garden culture.)<sup>184</sup> Besides, the ceremony of handling the

- 
183. For a discussion of the 'complex' process of abstraction, which in Weber's judgment "only appears to be simple" where it has been carried out in primitive instances of religious behavior, see Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 401- 439 (passim).
184. Translated by Robyn Goldstein and Nina Wernka. The original German reads as "Aber nur die Mongolen haben zeitweise ernsthaft miene gemacht, sich gegen die überlegene Kultur der Ackerbauer als Nomaden zu behaupten (durch Verbot des Bodenanbaus in einem

plough was among the ritual acts of the imperial **pontifex maximus**. In view of this, the nomadic derivation of part or even all of the old ruling stratum may well be insignificant. The existence of the "bachelor house" (see above), of course, has nothing to do with "nomadism," but indicates that in these communities the men are engaged in hunting and warfare while the women cultivated the land. Milk consumption has obviously been absent in China a long time and this fact contradicts the nomadic hypothesis. Large cattle were used for work or were sacrificed; only small cattle were normally consumed.<sup>185</sup>

Apparently, Weber learned of the declaration forbidding land cultivation around the capital from the work of sinologists. If he knew then when the declaration was offered, he did not mention it specifically because it was not relevant to the point he was

---

bestimmten Umkreis der Hauptstadt). Den Chinesen ihrerseits aber war - und das spricht deutlicher als alle Ueberlieferung fur die Kontinuitat der uralten Hack- und Gartenkultur--...." Weber, "Confucianism und Taoism," in Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p. 350. The Gerth translation reads "Only the Mongols seriously prepared to maintain themselves as nomads before the superior culture of the agriculturalists, and they did so for a time by forbidding the cultivation of land surrounding the capital. Consumption of milk, however, remained alien to the Chinese and this speaks more clearly than any tradition for the continuity of the primeval hoe and garden culture." Weber, The Religion of China, p. 271. Notice that the opposition between Mongols way of life and that of the agriculturalists is not clearly spelled out in the original translation. Neither is the pleasure that comes from consuming milk. Perhaps Gerth (like Robertson) had in mind the sort of gradual transition from nomadism to agricultural that is implied in the distinction between pastoral and agricultural societies. Gerth did not realize that the Mongols eventually left only to return again. Nor did he grasp the fact that Weber meant to suggest that the Mongols had no bearing at all on cultural evolution in China, as I will demonstrate.

185. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 271.

trying to make. From the way in which the declaration was worded Weber became aware of the superior attitude which the issuing of such an order evoked in the minds of the Chinese agriculturalists living perhaps closest to the capital, having inferred that the Mongols were spoken of thereafter as "the barbarians."<sup>186</sup> In any case, Weber concluded from the fact that the order was declared on their behalf that it was in the immediate vicinity of the capital that these nomadic invaders had set up camp. He also knew from the ban on cultivating the land around the capital the seriousness of the threat to the Mongol way of life that the hoe-and-garden culture must have posed. In other words, he could tell this from the way the Mongols addressed the question of maintaining themselves as a free community of nomads in the face of a patently superior culture capable of maintaining the continuity of its state organization with "permanent" settlements.

Weber grasped the historical significance that the Chinese themselves attached to the order issued by the Mongols from the fact that the event was recorded. He was certain that milk-drinking remained alien to the Chinese even after the Mongols left the vicinity of the capital. In effect, it seems that the superior attitude expressed by the Chinese aversion to milk served not only as a protection (an inner guarantee) of their culture surviving the barbarian presence but also as a guarantee of the continued survival of their culture should the barbarians

---

186. Ibid. p. 265.

invade again (which was expected). From the Chinese reaction to the Mongols' ban on cultivating land, Weber was able to infer that of all the nomadic peoples who had invaded and subjugated the river plains, the Mongols were the first to pose a serious threat to the Chinese culture. He suspected that the repeated incursions of prehistoric times had no bearing at all on cultural evolution.

In view of the emperor's position as high priest administering the harvest of the Chinese state organization, Weber concluded that what was significant to the specific evolution of Chinese culture was the derivation of the old ruling stratum from the leadership of communities that relied upon agriculture. Apparently, managing the harvest was a common concern.

Still, Weber seems to have been aware that the existence of the bachelor house in China had nothing to do with nomadism from having identified and analyzed the purely militaristic symbols that marked the beginning of Chinese cultural development. Otherwise, the only other 'legitimate' scientific reason that he could have had for telling the reader after having mentioned the existence of the 'bachelor house,' to "see above" was that his decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house in China was made prior to an analysis of the symbols which he subsequently mentions. In effect, it was necessary for us to consider Chinese agriculture, as Weber did in a footnote, in order to show that it not only was Weber who made the connection

between the presence of the bachelor house and the achievement of culture in China, but also that it was Weber who advised his readers to study the problem of what motivated his decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house because such study might further the understanding of what provoked the quest for scientific knowledge in this particular instance.

Weber subsequently observed in the body of the text how "in our context, we need consider it" (referring to Chinese agriculture)

in so far as problems of agrarian policy reveal the nature of Chinese state organization. For it will be seen at a glance that military and financial reform determined fundamental changes in the rural economy. Hence, the history of Chinese agriculture displays a monotonous to and fro between alternative equally possible principles of taxation.<sup>187</sup>

Perhaps as a result of having adduced several reasons but no satisfactory answer to the question of why capitalism did not emerge in China, Weber found that it was necessary to consider Chinese agriculture. At this point, we do not know whether or not an analysis of Weber's thoughts on the subject would contribute to our understanding of his decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house.

Weber tells us that the sources available to the non-sinologist at the time did not provide any information about

---

187. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 64.

"the initial extent of a manorial economy<sup>188</sup> like that of the Occident."<sup>189</sup> These sources did not allow Weber to ascertain the make-up of the agrarian community. Still, he was willing to entertain the idea that possibly "the village community was fiscal in origin, as has often happened elsewhere,"<sup>190</sup> even though this is not usually the case.<sup>191</sup> The village, in other words, came into existence after the state was constituted. Writes Weber,

for instance, under the T'ang dynasty in 624 A.D., the peasants were organized into small administrative districts (**hsiang**) for purposes of taxation. In these districts the peasants were guaranteed certain allotments which were perhaps received from public land. These facts are beyond doubt, since Japan has borrowed the institution. Retirement from the **hsiang** and land sale in this case was permissible, but purchase into another tax collectivity was required. Certainly the associations of landlords did not end with this merely relative closure.<sup>192</sup>

- 
188. Weber suggests that the Occidental manor represents a form of "seigniorial proprietorship" or territorial ownership by a lord. For discussion of the manor, see pp. 63- 9 of Weber's General Economic History.
189. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 65.
190. Ibid., p. 54. Obviously, the "village" represents a form of land settlement. For a discussion of the land settlement having the village form rather than that of the isolated farmstead in the Germany that was originally settled by the Teutons see Max Weber, General Economic History, p. 21-2.
191. Ibid. p. 65.
192. Ibid.

Thus, whatever reason Weber had for being certain that the associations of landlords which made-up the village communities were not destroyed by the merely relative closure that was achieved, what was important to Weber at this point was the fact that the landlords who comprised the village communities continued their existing association with one another despite the regrouping of the population that occurred with the formation of tax collectivities.<sup>193</sup> So far as Weber was concerned the fact that such a "radical regrouping of the population into joint liability associations of tax payers, serfs, and draftees"<sup>194</sup> did not destroy the village communities indicates

that the duty of tilling the soil in the fiscal interest of the state was always considered primary. The corresponding "right" to the land was derivative.<sup>195</sup>

According to Weber, however, this situation

did not result in a communal village economy which would correspond to Germanic, Russian, or Indian conditions. The existence of village commons (**Allmende**) in the Western sense can only be inferred from occasional hints and as part of the remote past.<sup>196</sup>

A communal village economy was never formally acknowledged. Rather, the presence of village commons in the distant past can

---

193. Ibid. p. 65.

194. Ibid. p.65.

195. Ibid. p.65.

196. Ibid., pp. 65-6.

be inferred from sporadic references in imperial tax decrees issued, Weber thought, "at the latest during the 11th century,"<sup>197</sup> in all likelihood much earlier, but obviously not before the emperor became interested in administering the empire. Weber was able to document the fact that

the imperial tax rescripts define not the village but the family as the taxable unit. This included those from 15 to 56 years who were its working members (ting). They were organized by rescript into artificial liability associations, at the latest during the 11th century and probably much earlier.<sup>198</sup>

Weber had deduced from the wording that the decrees did not refer either to the most primitive sort of family grouping of mother and children or to a stable economic household unit of father and mother,<sup>199</sup> but to a more complex economic organization of the kin group extending beyond the household.<sup>200</sup>

Having considered the sharp fiscal interventions, Weber concluded:

---

197. Ibid. pp. 65-6.

198. Ibid., pp. 65-6.

199. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 111.

200. According to Weber, "human services for economic purposes may be distinguished as (a) 'managerial,' or (b) oriented to the instructions of a managerial agency. The latter type will be called 'labor'.... Thus, the fact that these rescripts refer to 'working members' of the family presupposes not only the presence of an agency administering their work, but an already existing interest in production. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 114.

It is not at all self-evident that a different association, which was perhaps originally confined to noble families, could have comprised, since remote times, the entire rural population.<sup>201</sup>

Since Weber already had determined that controlling the harvest was a common concern of the members of the old ruling stratum, he perhaps suspected that this different association originally could have been confined to noble families who comprised at least part of the rural population before the state organization was constituted. As Weber explains, "The association was not destroyed by these fiscal measures."<sup>202</sup> In other words, this different association came into existence before the state organization was constituted and, therefore, before the imperial administration's preoccupation with fiscal matters led, as it seemed, to the villages meeting "their need for security with their own organization."<sup>203</sup> Weber subsequently noted that

the unbroken and continued existence of the cohesive sib and the pre-eminent position of its head, can be ascertained through thousands of years. Ancient landlordism in China may well have originated in this. As we noted above, military service and presumably all public charges were

---

201. Weber, The Religion of China, pp. 65-6.

202. Ibid. pp. 65-6.

203. Ibid. pp. 65-6.

originally allocated to the sib.<sup>204</sup>

Weber, at this point, had reason to suspect that the sib was not merely the unit of economic maintenance to which the corresponding "right" to the land was thought to belong. It was also the "family" unit to which the imperial tax decrees referred. From the many references to the sib and the changes in the tax structure, Weber apparently was able to infer that "the head of the sib was held responsible for the allocation of taxes and labor."<sup>205</sup> Thus, assuming that the head of the sib was already involved in managing its economic affairs and in military administration, he would have been the obvious man to hold responsible for allocating taxes and labor.

Nevertheless, the fact that Weber was able to confirm the unbroken existence of the cohesive sib through thousands of years did not eliminate the possibility that for a "brief" period of time after the introduction of the horse the sib ceased to exist.<sup>206</sup> According to Weber, "the feeling of solidarity is the

---

204. Ibid. pp. 65-6.

205. Ibid., pp. 65-6.

206. The fact that in the interest of administering the empire the head of the sib was chosen when the question of allocating labor for economic and military purposes arose is a clear indication that the period in which the sib ceased to exist (between the time of the introduction of the horse in the sixteenth century B.C. and the founding of the empire) did not last for very long. The memory of the chief's success as a political leader in the manner of a prince was not lost.

crucial test of the sib."<sup>207</sup> In other words, it is quite possible that even before "the historical development of the .... differentiation between cult and sorcery"<sup>208</sup> there arose a feeling of solidarity among sib associates and that this feeling of solidarity was lost for a time as a result of events in which the horse played a precipitating role. For it seems that Weber had in mind and was actually referring to the sib's "continued existence" beyond certain (and perhaps these) developments. Was the sib, in fact, the original form of economic organization out of which the hoe and garden culture of China evolved? If the thought had occurred to Weber at this moment, he kept it to himself knowing that certain doubts first had to be eliminated

---

207. Translated by Robyn Goldstein and Nina Wernka. The original German reads "Der Zusammenhalt der Sippe und sein Bewahrung...." Gerth apparently assumed that Weber was referring to the ancestor cult, an error that is easily understood but that distorts Weber's understanding of the sib's development. For if Gerth's translation which reads, "The cohesion of the sib undoubtedly rested wholly upon ancestor cult," is accurate and if, as Weber indicated elsewhere, "the sibs as bearers of the central religious concerns, the ancestor cult and were therefore indestructible," then the period we are concerned with here in which the sib ceased to exist could not have occurred. See Weber, "Konfuzianismus und Taoismus," in Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p. 376, Weber, The Religion of China, pp. 87, and Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 1260-61.

208. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 424. Notice that in Weber's opinion "the relationships of men to supernatural forces may be termed 'cult' (Kultus) and 'religion,'" as distinguished from "sorcery," which is magical coercion. Our point is that Weber did not treat this distinction as arbitrary. Ibid., pp. 424-25.

from his mind.

### 3. Economic Organization

According to the reports of Chinese authors, an economic system similar to that introduced by the Dutch East India Company was once prevalent in China. The arable land was partitioned into tracts. Each tract consisted of a square field divided by tripartitioning the sides; each tract, therefore, consisted of nine squares.<sup>209</sup> The outer squares, Weber explains, "were assigned to individual families."<sup>210</sup> The eight surrounding holders were obliged to cultivate the center part for the state which meant that the inner tract was reserved for the emperor or possibly for a landlord. The land was allotted to an individual family "only for use" so that when the head of the household died, the land was redistributed.<sup>211</sup> Weber, however, does not conclude that the land allotment was the actual basis of the well system.<sup>212</sup> Rather, he observed, that "the land allotment may be considered the actual or at least the original basis of the so-

---

209. For a description of the 'well system' see Weber, General Economic History, p.34, Weber, The Religion of China, p. 72.

210. Weber, General Economic History, p.34.

211. Ibid., p. 34.

212. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 72. In effect, the "well system" was the name given to the method of distributing land in such a way that some of it would be cultivated for the state and was specifically applied in regions that made use of the irrigation techniques of wet rice culture.

called 'well system'.<sup>213</sup> Apparently, there was some question in Weber's mind as to whether or not the land allotment was the real basis of the well system even though he was aware that

among Chinese authors the well system enjoyed a sort of classical status as the true national system of land distribution.<sup>214</sup>

Supposedly, the well system was named after the Chinese character representing a square field divided into nine parts. This seems to have been the consensus.<sup>215</sup> Yet, as Weber reports,

it was so named, too, because irrigation ditches, pipes, and a long lasting inundation of the dammed up areas were indispensable to rice cultivation.<sup>216</sup>

Throughout Asia, (including Java) sweeping changes in property relations and, in particular, fiscal interventions were based on the need to channel water.<sup>217</sup> The fact that, in China such interventions appear to have been originally directed toward the "family" in China and, hence, toward an already existing unit of economic maintenance<sup>218</sup> means that the original economic organization cannot be found in the well system. Rather, what

---

213. Ibid., p. 72.

214. Ibid., p. 72. Conceivably Weber meant that these authors also thought that the well-system actually arose out of primitive conditions.

215. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 272-3.

216. Ibid., p. 272-73.

217. Ibid., p. 272-73.

218. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 356-69.

Weber suggested by raising the question of its actual basis was that possibly the "system, which is usually considered quite old"<sup>219</sup> of irrigation upon which the "well" system was actually based "rationally evolved from the original cultivation of the chieftain's land by sib members."<sup>220</sup> In effect, Weber had determined<sup>221</sup> that in the case of China (as with the Dutch East India Company) the "communistic organization of agriculture" which the well system represented

was dictated by fiscal considerations, and did not arise out of primitive conditions. The original Chinese economic organization is found instead in the clan economy still common in the Chinese villages, where the clan has its ancestral temple and its school and carries on tillage and economic life in common.<sup>222</sup>

Weber explains elsewhere that the household is not merely a primitive institution but requires a certain measure of organized cultivation of the soil.<sup>223</sup> He writes,

the household does not seem to have existed in a primitive economy of hunters and nomads. However, even under the conditions of a technically well-advanced agriculture, the household

---

219. Ibid., pp. 356-69.

220. Ibid., pp. 356-69.

221. Weber claims that "this system was only of passing significance and dominated only in the neighborhood of large rivers where rice culture by flooding was possible." Weber, General Economic History, p. 34.

222. Weber, General Economic History, p.34.

223. Ibid., p. 358.

is often secondary with respect to a preceding state which accorded more power to the inclusive kinship and neighborhood group on the one hand, and more freedom to the individual vis-a-vis the parents, children, grandchildren, and siblings on the other hand.<sup>224</sup>

Accordingly, the stable economic household unit must have followed a preceding state that accorded more power to the clan (which was a more inclusive kin group of those living within the same neighborhood) if a measure of organized cultivation of the soil did not exist before the cultivation of the chieftain's land by clan members. Perhaps, then, enough freedom was accorded to the individual that the thought arose of escaping the cycle of militarism to which clan members were accustomed. At this point, Weber knew of the kin group's having a head. He had reason to suspect that the kin group also functioned as a political group (in the sense of a territorial community) whenever the need arose. What then convinced Weber to look for evidence of the existence of a heterogeneous structure possibly formed in response to the threat that the effort to escape the cycle of militarism posed? Apparently, he had already concluded,

If the kin group has a head and functions as a political group, it may serve originally extraneous purposes of a political, military, or economic nature; in this case it becomes part of a heterogeneous social structure....<sup>225</sup>

Also, his knowing that the kin group originally served

---

224. Ibid., p. 358.

225. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 367.

economic purposes was important. For as a rule, Weber noticed, "the 'kin group' is not an extended or decentralized household or a superordinate structure uniting several households."<sup>226</sup> He was aware of exceptions to the rule, but also observed that where exceptions to the rule occurred, the kin group has generally adopted "the form of a rationalized organization such as the clan association."<sup>227</sup> Obviously, Weber knew at this point,<sup>228</sup> that China was an exception to the rule. His own words were "China was one of those exceptional cases where extended kinship has constituted an economic unit."<sup>228</sup> Did Weber have a specific reason for gathering that in the case of China the kin group had taken the form of a rationalized organization?<sup>229</sup>

---

226. Ibid., p. 145.

227. Ibid., p. 145.

228. Perhaps, at this juncture in the discussion of the principal forms of appropriation and in particular of sedentary agriculture Weber had already considered the development of Chinese agriculture in so far as problems of agrarian policy revealed the nature of the Chinese state organization. For it is quite possible that the only way in which Weber could have known that China was an exception to this rule was by considering this development where he learned, as we have shown, that extended kinship constituted an economic unit.

228. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 145.

229. Ibid., p. 145. According to Weber, "a social relationship will be called 'associative' (Vergesellschaftung) if and in so far as the orientation of social action within it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement, whether the basis of rational judgment be absolute values or reasons of expediency." See Economy and Society, p. 40-41. Thus,

#### 4. Military, Political, and Social Organization

In China, as elsewhere, a long time was needed to domesticate cattle.<sup>230</sup> Referring specifically to China, Weber noticed that at a certain point large cattle were employed as work animals or for sacrifices;<sup>231</sup> "only small cattle were normally consumed."<sup>232</sup> Nonetheless, if the transition from primitive hoe culture to an irrigation culture in China occurred directly (before there was heavy labor with the plow) and if the irrigation culture grew out of the sib organization, then the domestication of cattle for the purpose of drawing the plow did not begin until after the sib economy already was developed. Conceivably, the domestication of cattle, particularly for 'economic' purposes (that is, satisfying needs) was not completed

---

it would seem that by 'rationalized organization' Weber meant to suggest that there was a rationally motivated agreement by which the clan association was constituted. The agreement apparently established the kinship of clan associates for without a notion of blood kinship it does not seem as if the unity so central to the sib could have been felt. Nevertheless, assuming that the sib ceased to exist for a time (and for now this is merely a speculation), the basis of the rational judgment must have been reasons of expediency and not absolute values (of which one is certain). Such an agreement would have lasted only for as long as it was mutually advantageous to all.

230. Weber, General Economic History, p. 45.

231. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 271.

232. Ibid., p. 271.

in China until after the "growth of empire."<sup>233</sup> In this context, the possibility of Weber's thinking that the sib ceased to exist for a time is not so remote even though, as it seems, the domestication of cattle followed more or less the same path in China as in other regions of the world. Writes Weber,

It probably began with work animals, milk animals coming later, while still today there are regions in the East in which milking is unknown.<sup>234</sup>

Weber found that, last of all, animals were tamed for military purposes:<sup>235</sup> that is, for fighting external enemies.<sup>236</sup> More precisely, Weber estimates

beginning in the sixteenth century (B.C.) we meet with the horse which was employed as a draft animal for the war chariot signifying that the epoch of knightly chariot fighting common to all peoples from China and India to Ireland had begun.<sup>237</sup>

Perhaps then it was the epoch of knightly chariot fighting that led to a heterogeneous structure in China. Nevertheless, there does not appear to be a way in which Weber could have known precisely of the make-up of the structure without words to that effect. As it seems, the structure's basic unit might be

---

233. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 418.

234. Weber, General Economic History, p. 45.

235. Ibid., p.45.

236. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 905. As Weber explains, organized action "of a military type" is "directed against an external enemy." Organized action "of a police type" is "directed against the disturbers of internal order."

237. Ibid., p. 905.

inferred from his understanding of the derivation of the old ruling stratum.

Although Weber had determined that "hoe culture could be carried on individually by the small family or with group labor, through the coming together of households even to hundreds of persons"<sup>238</sup> so far as China was concerned, hoe culture originally was carried on with the group labor of the sib association. This mode of husbandry may have been the result of a considerable development of technique that was inspired by the central idea of brotherliness that formed the basis of the sib association. For as Weber explains, rationalization works in such a way that the ruled and led merely accept or learn to make use of the external and technical results which are of practical significance to their interests.

Weber surmises that "hunting must originally have been carried on in common, though its socialization was the result of circumstances".<sup>239</sup> At this point, we have no reason to doubt that this was true of hunting in China. Nevertheless, if the keeping of cattle could have been carried on by the individual family and must have been, then conceivably it was not carried on at all until the individual family actually formed a stable household unit. In any case, from Weber's standpoint, the social groups engaged in cattle raising "could not have been very large

---

238. Weber, General Economic History, p. 45.

239. Ibid., p. 45.

on account of the scattering of herds over large areas."<sup>240</sup> Finally, even if extensive agriculture, as Weber explains, "could have been carried on by both methods"<sup>241</sup> it would appear that extensive agriculture was not carried on at all during the period with which we are concerned.

Cutting across these differences in the form of husbandry was the manner in which labor was divided between the sexes. Apparently Weber found that "originally the tilling of the soil and the harvesting fell mainly to the woman"<sup>242</sup> no matter which extreme in the form of organization associated with hoe culture was more nearly approached. Yet, if there was labor only with the hoe (instead of heavy labor with the plow) in China, then the man's presence originally was not needed, particularly if the domestication of animals had not begun. Hence he did not have to participate. Thus, it is possible that man's work was limited to hunting and war and that he was not concerned at all with domesticating animals or was concerned only with sacrificing cattle in order to guarantee the success of hunting and war expeditions. In other words, the man had no clear province of work in the home. Under these circumstances, it is conceivable that there arose the kind of military organization which took the man away from the household permanently and the kind of household managed by the woman alone. Presumably the father relationship

---

240. Ibid., p. 45.

241. Ibid., p. 45.

242. Ibid., p. 45.

did not exist or was not of great import. For as Weber suggests, the father relationship cannot exist or cannot be of great import without a stable economic household unit of father and mother, especially in the formative stages of a child's development when the child is not able "to search for means of subsistence on his own."<sup>243</sup>

It is therefore possible that out of the interaction of the conditions that were specific to primitive economic life in China only one type of communalization emerged--that of hunting and fighting. There was no heavy labor with the plow and, therefore, no need for field work. From Weber's standpoint, there was no reason to assume that the communalization of housework and field work had occurred. Conceivably, in other words, corresponding to the individual household management of the tillage by women, there was the men's house. This means that for a period of their lives, lasting between 25 and 30 years the men lived "together in a club house" separated from their families. From the house as their central location, the men hunt; they conduct wars; they perform magic; and they make weapons. As a rule, Weber adds, the group of men is separated into age classes. When they reach a certain age, they retire from the men's house to their villages and wives.

Weber found that generally the men's house acknowledges a novitiate. At a given age, young boys are taken from their families. After being taken through certain magical procedures

---

<sup>243</sup>. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 357.

(circumcision often being one of them), they receive the blessing that defines them as young men, and (in Weber's words) "take up their life in the men's house."<sup>244</sup>

Particularly in the case where the land is treated as "spear land" (that is, terrain which has been conquered and is under the guardianship of the man),<sup>245</sup> which the possibility of the original cultivation of the chieftain's land by sib members would suggest, the group would have had a head and would function as a political group whenever its dominion was threatened. Spear land also suggests the ever-ready presence of a military organization.<sup>246</sup> So as not to disturb the economic foundation of military service, the allotment of land is kept within the province of the paternal clan. In effect, the way in which the military group could have kept "the allotment of land as a function of the paternal clan"<sup>247</sup> was by rationalizing in their own minds the presence of such an organization. Thus, with the achievement of culture, the ancient sib ties to the military organization of the bachelor house could have been forged. Weber had reason to suspect that as a result of events that were precipitated by the introduction of the horse, the political community of the sib which had ceased to exist in the warriors' minds was revived concomitant with an external order of the

---

244. Weber, General Economic History, p. 47.

245. Ibid., p. 37.

246. Ibid., p. 48

247. Weber, General Economic History, p. 48.

social community being identified. Possibly then bachelor house was not only the most ancient form of organization in China but also the first of its kind to have achieved culture in the world. Certainly, in order to conduct an investigation into the existence of the bachelor house in China it was necessary for Weber to have achieved an understanding of primitive agricultural life everywhere, of the possible extremes of primitive organization, and of the possible course of development of Chinese military, economic, political, and social organization. Did Weber then have any inkling that Chinese thought might represent an unbroken unity? Certainly, there are grounds for the thought on Weber's part.

## CHAPTER 4

## THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CULTURE

A reading of Religion of China, reminds us of a situation which seems to have been virtually ignored by both critics and champions of the work, namely, the fact that Max Weber admittedly was not a specialist in sinology. Weber's only way of gaining access to prehistoric China was through translations of actual sources and through the work of other specialists. There were questions about China that Max Weber could not answer because, in his own words, "the resources available to the non-sinologist are limited."<sup>248</sup> Two questions arise: how did Weber ascertain the presence of the bachelor house in China with the resources that were available to him,<sup>249</sup> and what, in Weber's estimation, was the significance of the achievement of culture by "the ancient

---

248. Weber, The Religion of China, p.271.

249. Weber observed that "within the realm of social action certain empirical uniformities can be observed, that is courses of action that are repeated by the actor or (simultaneously) occur among numerous actors since the subjective meaning is meant to be the same. Sociological investigation is concerned with these typical modes of action. Thereby, it differs from history, the subject of which is rather the causal explanation of important individual events; important, that is, in having an influence on human destiny." From Economy and Society, p. 29. We, therefore, consider this question to be 'historical' in that our objective is to causally explain not only how Weber specifically determined that the bachelor house achieved culture, but the influence that this possibly had on the direction of his own work.

Chinese sacred military organization"<sup>250</sup> which the bachelor house represented?

### 1. The Terrain

Judging the terrain of China in terms of how one might profit from using what the land rendered, Weber seems to have concluded, on the basis of what he had read, that it resembled the terrain that encompassed the Palestine plain with its "natural grazing" areas and "sterile desert" bordering Palestine in the south and east.<sup>251</sup> The terrain of China at the time of the achievement of culture by the sacred military organization (like that of Tibet at the time that culture was achieved by the ascetic organization of Lamas) was, in Weber's own words,

---

250. Weber, Religion of India, (New York: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 289-90.

251. Weber, Ancient Judaism, (New York: The Free Press, 1952), p. 8. Apparently Weber originally learned from the book of Joshua of the climatically determined contrasts in economic opportunities that Palestine afforded. His choice of the same words to describe the economic opportunities China afforded indicates that he understood from an earlier study of the culture of ancient Jewry that the comparison was appropriate. Conceivably then not only is it possible to trace the sequence of Weber's writings from an analysis of his work, but understandably that such an analysis would reflect Weber's own intellectual growth in Weber's own terms. It would seem that without such an analysis the international German-based project which, as Vatro Murvar reports, "is underway to trace the original sequence of (Weber's) writings in order to reflect more accurately all the aspects of his intellectual growth" and that "will result in the publication of his restructured works" might not only add to the misunderstanding of Weber as a sociologist of knowledge that already exists but also complicate it even further. Murvar, Max Weber Today: An Introduction to a Living Legacy: Selected bibliography, pp. i- 33.

"partially extensive eternal pasture and partly simply desert."<sup>252</sup> Weber, in effect, used the very same language to describe all three culture areas. Nevertheless, he could not agree with sinologists that the naturally given similarities found between China and Palestine constituted an adequate basis for supposing an original nomadism in China similar to the nomadism found in the region of Palestine.<sup>253</sup> Weber was firm in pointing out that "it is not possible to discuss prehistoric China here, particularly the original nomadism which has been supposed by sinologists."<sup>254</sup> He seemed certain that, "The naturally given contrasts in economic conditions have always found expression in differences of the social and economic structure."<sup>255</sup> Possibly Weber meant that we cannot resolve the question of whether or not naturally given similarities in economic conditions have found expression in a similar way of life on other than empirical grounds. For Weber's understanding seems to have been that the limited sources then available to the non-sinologist offered no concrete evidence that would indicate an original nomadism or that warranted his supposing an original nomadism in China. In other words, scientific grounds for discussing the possibility of an initial presence of nomads in

---

252. Weber, The Religion of India, p. 289.

253. Ibid., pp.8-9.

254. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 271.

255. Weber, Ancient Judaism, p. 10.

China, wandering from region to region in search of the kind of secure existence which no one region could offer, did not exist in the sources that were available to Weber at the time.

## 2. The Military Symbols

By contrast, Weber was willing to discuss the military symbols that marked the beginning of Chinese cultural development and the possibility that the bachelor house, or men's house, was prevalent. He wrote,

(The beginning of Chinese cultural development was marked by purely militaristic symbols.)<sup>256</sup> Originally the **shih** is the "hero," later the official. The "hall of studies" (**Pi-yung kung**) where, according to ritual, the emperor in person interpreted the classics seems originally to have been a "bachelor house" (bachelor house) such as prevailed among almost all warrior and hunting peoples. There the fraternity of young warriors were garrisoned by age group away from family life. After having proven themselves, they were armed and initiated through the "capping" ceremony which is still preserved. The extent to which the typical system of age groups was elaborated remains open to question. Etymology seems to suggest that women originally managed the tillage alone, but never participated in nondomestic rites. Obviously the bachelor house was that of the (charismatic) warrior chieftain where diplomatic transactions (such as the surrender of enemies) were consummated, where weapons were stored and trophies (cut-off ears) were deposited. (Here in men's house, the league of young recruits practiced rhythmic (and that means disciplined) archery. According to the results the prince chose his following and officers

---

256. Translated by Robyn Goldstein and Nina Wernka.

(hence the ceremonial significance of archery until recent times). It is possible (even though not certain)<sup>257</sup> that ancestral spirits also gave advice there. If all this is true, the reports concerning original matrilineal descent accords with it. "Matriarchy," resulted from the father's military estrangement from family life. All this is very remote in historical time.<sup>258</sup>

By the end of his analysis Weber seems to have had little doubt that warrior communism (the communism of warriors maintained out of common stores) in the form of the men's house had spread throughout the greater part of this earth "as a kind of barracks of casino of the professional warriors,"<sup>259</sup> that it had originated independently in China, and that rather than constitute a completely independent closed association as was the rule, it was incorporated into a political association whose territory was fixed by boundaries. In Weber's own words,

the existence of the "bachelor house" . . . . of course, has nothing to do with "nomadism," but indicates that in these communities the men engaged in hunting and warfare while the women cultivated the land.<sup>260</sup>

Having analyzed the "purely militaristic symbols"<sup>261</sup> that

---

257. Translated by Robyn Goldstein and Nina Wernka.

258. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24. "Konfuzianismus und Taoismus," in Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, (JCB Mohr, 1972, Paul Siebeck, Tübingen), p. 302.

259. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1153.

260. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 271.

261. Gerth's translation of Weber reads that "the Chinese Empire, in historical times, became an increasingly pacified world empire

Having analyzed the "purely militaristic symbols"<sup>261</sup> that marked the beginnings of Chinese cultural development,<sup>262</sup> Weber not only surmised that there were primitive communities in China

---

261. Gerth's translation of Weber reads that "the Chinese Empire, in historical times, became an increasingly pacified world empire despite its war campaigns. To be sure, Chinese culture originated under the banner of pure militarism. Originally, the *shih* is the 'hero,' later the official. The 'hall of studies' (Pi-yung kung) where, according to ritual, the emperor in person interpreted the classics seems originally to have been a 'bachelor house' (qiyongcun) such as prevailed among almost all warrior and hunting peoples...." This translation, however, appears to complicate and to confuse Weber's meaning to the point of it being incomprehensible. What could Weber have meant by a "under the banner of pure militarism"? When was this banner waved? Who waved it? After some time spent on working out what Weber could have meant, it occurred to me to examine the original German. Weber specifically wrote, "Zwar der Anfang der Chinesischen Kulturentwicklung stand unter rein militaristischen Zeichen." Together, Nina Wernka and I worked out a translation consistent with Weber's former and subsequent remarks. Our translation reads, "However, the beginning of Chinese cultural development was marked by purely militaristic symbols." Thus, it is apparent that Weber used the term "however" in order to make the comparison to the increasingly pacified Chinese Empire of historical times. Moreover, it is clear that by these militaristic symbols Weber was referring to the "*shih*," "the capping ceremony," the etymology, archery.... and, hence, to the evidence which, from his standpoint, confirms the presence of the bachelor house in China. The Religion of China, edited by Hans Gerth, p. 24, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, by Max Weber, (JCB Mohr 1972, Paul Siebeck, Tübingen) p. 302.

262. Ibid., p.302.

in times "ancient" even by Chinese conception<sup>263</sup> but also became aware of the periodic occurrence of extraordinary events in these communities where it was understood that the "hero" played a leading role. The history of the meaning of the term "shih" suggested such a development. This, in other words, is what Weber meant when he wrote that "Originally, the shih is the "hero," later, the official."<sup>264</sup>

---

263. Calendar-making, Weber suggests, is archaic and first served to allocate agricultural functions to the proper seasons. The annalists originally were calendar-makers whose calculations of the eclipses of the sun extended back into the second millennium B.C. Presumably such calculations were not made until after the original economic organization of the sib was formed and techniques of irrigation had been developed in the sib economy. Weber had observed that "irrigation was already developed at the time when the art of writing emerged and perhaps the latter was connected with the administrative needs of the former." In effect, the communities in which the form of organization of the bachelor houses first arose and through rationalization were transformed into clan associations must have been in existence in China some time and perhaps long before the second millennium. Presumably, the form of the men's house originated in one community and the concept spread to others in China for this seems to have been Weber's understanding of how the form of organization of the bachelor house spread throughout the greater part of this earth. For Weber's discussion of calendar making in China see The Religion of China, pp. 108, 196, 279.

264. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24. Neither imperial authority nor an officialdom existed in China during the period with which we are concerned. For this reason, I initially did not think that it was necessary to mention that the shih later referred to the official and, thereby, missed Weber's point. In China, if monopolistic domination in the market of extraordinary resources was transformed into domination by authority and if the creation of an officialdom was part of that development, then such a transformation did not begin until after

The recognition of the hero (the thought of certain persons revealing exceptional strength to which a following surrenders) and, therefore, of an ordering<sup>265</sup> of men according to whether or not the specific forces which their actions reveal are judged to be extraordinary<sup>266</sup> corroborates Weber's point:

We might almost say that the normal condition of primitive communities was anarchy moderated by compliance with customs, which were either unreflecting or motivated by apprehension toward the uncertain consequences of innovation.... However, the charisma of the hero or magician is immediately activated whenever an extraordinary event occurs: a major hunting expedition, a drought, or some other danger precipitated by the wrath of demons and especially a military threat.<sup>267</sup>

The observation suggests Weber's understanding why primitive

---

the empire was formed. Hence, it was Weber's understanding that the *shih* must have referred to the hero before the empire was constituted. For an interesting discussion of the change from monopolistic domination in the market to domination by virtue of "authority" in the specific sense of "power to command and duty to obey," see Economy and Society, pp. 943- 48.

265. "The content of a social relationship (will) be called an order if the conduct is, approximately or on average, oriented toward determinable 'maxims'." Max Weber, Economy and Society, p.31 Apparently Weber meant to suggest that the presence of a word for the hero indicates that in these communities, the 'order' implied in the following of a leader was clearly acknowledged despite its fleeting character.
266. Referring to China, Weber mentions that "charisma was always an extraordinary force (*maga*, *orenda*) and was revealed through sorcery and heroism." Weber, The Religion of China, p. 30.
267. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1134.

Such action (on the part of a leader and his following) that flares up in response to some external or internal threat dies down once the threat is gone, succeeded by the factual condition of relative anarchy characterizing normal peaceful times when both coexistence and social action are evident in the mutual respect for the accustomed economic sphere that is shown by the territories inhabitants. Such a 'political community' exists, in other words, for as long as the extraordinary force or charisma of the hero is activated. Yet, it is not the sort of community which can be said to exist as a separate structure for it does not even constitute an economic group.<sup>268</sup>

The fact is that legitimacy originally had not much bearing upon violence in these communities. Legitimacy was germane to violence not in the sense that the violence was bounded by norms, but in the sense that the violence was exercised against a threat to a community's existence. The little bearing that legitimacy had on violence cannot be observed too clearly. The original meaning of the term "shih" as hero merely suggested such a development. Weber, however, could understand the consensual

---

268. Ibid., p. 902 Weber writes that "as a separate structure, a political community can be said to exist only if, and in so far as, a community constitutes more than an 'economic group'; or, in other words, in so far as it possesses value systems ordering matters other than the directly economic disposition of goods and services." For a general discussion of political communities and their formation, see Economy and Society, pp. 901-14.

behavior<sup>269</sup> of those who immediately supported a leader in an organized action, their adherence precipitated by the expectation of the leader providing relief of external or internal distress or success in a risky undertaking.

The fact, specifically noted by Weber, that in territorial communities like these

legitimacy originally had little bearing upon violence--in the sense that it was not bound by norms--can be observed even more clearly in situations where the most warlike members of a group on their own initiative consociate through personal fraternization to organize marauding raids.<sup>270</sup>

The violence was "bounded" by the norm of plundering only those outside the consociation. Thus, from Weber's standpoint, the only bearing that 'legitimacy' would have had upon violence was on the occasion of someone "endangering by treachery or cowardice the security of the collective fighting (force) or, after disciplined combat came into being, by disobedience."<sup>271</sup> A punitive reaction by the chief or his administrative staff was expected, assuming of course that military misbehavior had been

---

269. For a discussion of the circumstances under which it may be claimed that a "consensus" exists see Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1378.

270. Ibid., pp. 904-6. For a more complete discussion of the nature, the "legitimacy," and the stages in the formation of political communities see Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 901-10.

271. Ibid., p. 651.

expected, assuming of course that military misbehavior had been established.<sup>272</sup>

Weber noticed that

this has been, at all stages of economic development up to the formation of the rational state, the typical way in which aggressive wars were initiated in sedentary societies. The freely selected leader is then normally legitimated by his personal qualities (charisma), and as we have discussed elsewhere, the kind of permanent structure of domination which then emerges.<sup>273</sup>

No doubt Weber thought that this was the actual way in which wars were first initiated in these communities in China as well, even though economic conditions were undifferentiated and even though it was barely possible to discern special political communities as such. In this instance, however, Weber had determined that the freely selected leader was not then legitimated by his personal qualities as is normally the case.

All primitive contracts whereby personal associations (whether temporary or permanent) are formed involve a change in both the universal and social position of those involved. The parties perform a straightforward magical act or an act having magical significance.<sup>274</sup> The parties, in other words, perform an

---

272. Ibid., p. 651.

273. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 906.

274. Weber indicates that whereas "we, judging behavior from the standpoint of the modern views of nature, can objectively differentiate those attributions of causality which are 'correct' from those which are 'false' and designate the false

act by which they demonstrate their ignorance of one another as individuals. Warriors initially become "followers" of a leader who, in promising them adventure, ushers in a new orientation in their relationship. The violence is bound by the norm of following the leader in a plunder campaign, and in that sense the total legal situation of the warriors temporarily changes.<sup>275</sup> The contract, Weber explains, also

meant that the person would "become" something different in quality (or status) from the quality he possessed before. For unless a person voluntarily assumed that new quality, his future conduct in his new role could hardly be believed to be possible at all. Each party must thus make a new "soul" enter his body.<sup>276</sup>

Weber observed that "fraternization at all times presupposes commensalism; it does not have to be practiced in everyday life, but it must be ritually possible."<sup>277</sup> Thus, whereas a primitive contract would have constituted the legal foundation of the

---

attributions of causality as magic, the person who is either performing the magical act or thinking as a magician will instead differentiate between the "greater or lesser ordinariness of the phenomenon in question." One wonders how pervasive "magical thinking" is today in the field of sociology. The answer to this question, of course, is beyond the scope of this work. See Weber, Economy and Society, p. 400.

275. For a general discussion of "primitive contracts" see Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 671- 73.

276. Ibid., p. 672.

277. Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 402.

"claim to be fed at a common table,"<sup>278</sup> it would not have constituted the legal foundation of any specific obligations. In Weber's own words,

To "fraternize" with another person, however, did not mean that a certain performance of the contract, contributing to the attainment of some specific object, was reciprocally guaranteed or expected.<sup>279</sup>

Possibly then the primitive contract was charisma's first exposure to the conditions of an everyday life and to its forces,<sup>280</sup> particularly economic. This agreement also may have been the turning point that is reached in primitive communities when the most warlike members first form a voluntary, possibly temporary association for the purpose of adventure and, hence, freely agree to initiate an organized action that is not fully charged with emotion.<sup>281</sup> Charisma, as it seems, was on the road away from a chaotic emotional life that knows no rationality at all. Nevertheless, from Weber's standpoint, it would be imprudent of us to anticipate in advance of the investigation where 'charisma' as extraordinary force revealed through heroism might

---

278. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1119.

279. Ibid., p. 672.

280. Obviously, we are not referring to the kind of everyday life of "a normal economy." Weber was aware that "the warlord's following is just as little concerned with the conditions of a normal economy as is the street crowd following of a revolutionary hero. Both live off booty, plunder, confiscations, contributions....These are extraordinary phenomena." Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 85.

281. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 671.

lead.

We can only assume that if Weber were convinced that this state was changed gradually as this *ad hoc* consociation developed into a permanent structure, then the resources available to him on China must have confirmed the development.<sup>282</sup>

In fact, it was not alone the expression "Pi-Yung Kung, or hall of studies," that seemed to indicate the presence of a sort of barracks where, as in the Spartan *syssitiae*, the able bodied were permanently housed for "educational" purposes.<sup>283</sup> Weber had surmised that the hall of studies originally was a military institution like the Spartan *gymnasia*.<sup>284</sup>

Additional factors substantiated Weber's claim that "the 'hall of Studies' (Pi-yung Kung) where, in accordance with

282. Ibid, p.906.

283. Ibid, p.371. Weber writes that, "the meal communities (*syssitiae*) of the Spartan full citizens, the severance of men in the military age group from their families for the length of their full service liability, and the communal training of the boys in military asceticism- all these were elements of the general type of education associated with the primeval warrior associations of the tribal youth." Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1287. Notice that Weber appears to have had reason to suspect that each one of these elements was present in the type of bachelor house that he found in China.

284. Weber, General Economic History, p. 47. "Compulsory associations" or "institutions" (*Anstalten*), as Weber defined them, are groups in which membership is based on objective criteria "regardless of the declared will of those included" and in which order has been rationally established. Those included, in effect, had no actual say in the matter.

ritual, the emperor went in person to interpret the classics, originally seems to have been a "bachelor house" (*ἀρπατεῖον*) of footsoldiers," prevalent among most warrior and hunting peoples.<sup>285</sup>

There, Weber supposed, "the fraternity of young warriors were garrisoned,"<sup>286</sup> separated by age groups and away from family life. After proving themselves, they were armed and initiated into the community by means of the "capping ceremony."<sup>287</sup> Weber perhaps thought that the capping ceremony was symbolic of that final point in the educational process, usually completed in stages, of "graduated ceremonious reception into the circle (of warriors) who have proven their charisma."<sup>288</sup>

As such, the capping ceremony did not actually represent a measure of the extent of the division into age classes. Although it indicated that there were a number of steps to the process of being received into the fraternity, it seems that Weber was unable to determine on the basis of the capping ceremony alone, whether or not the system of age groups, which Heinrich Schurtz typically found in the men's house<sup>289</sup> was prevalent in China. He could only conclude "that the extent to which the typical system

---

285. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24.

286. Ibid., p. 24.

287. Ibid., p. 24.

288. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1143.

289. Weber found that Schurtz studied the men's house with "so much sympathetic care." See Weber, Economy and Society, p. 906.

of age groups was elaborated (in China) remains open to question."<sup>290</sup>

Weber knew of words which seemed to indicate that the women managed land cultivation by themselves, not ever participating in rites other than those connected with household chores.<sup>291</sup> Weber had concluded that women were disqualified from bearing arms by virtue of the secondary religious status assigned to them. Hence, they were not allowed to participate in the ritual activities associated with military training. He writes:

Wherever an ascetic training of warriors involving the rebirth of the hero is or has been dominant, woman is regarded as lacking a higher heroic soul and is consequently assigned a secondary religious status.<sup>292</sup>

The notion of rebirth was quite ancient, particularly in the case of China<sup>293</sup> where the possession of magical charisma would have presupposed a rebirth (mediated by the temporary acquisition of a new soul) at the moment the most warlike members consociated to organize marauding raids. If, however, the original charismatic leader of a marauding raid and his voluntary following had no expectation of the organized action lasting beyond the immediate present, then it would have been necessary for them, upon successfully completing a mission, to consociate

---

290. Ibid., p. 1143.

291. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24.

292. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 489.

293. Ibid., p. 528-9.

again to organize the next marauding raid.<sup>294</sup> Since the agreement was not intended to be of permanent duration, the "rebirth" that they experienced was temporary.<sup>295</sup> The leader's sudden disappearance on the battlefield, for instance, might have resulted in the acknowledgment of a pretender as actually having charisma.<sup>296</sup> Unlike his predecessor, the pretender would have actually demonstrated that his charisma was genuine and not artificially produced by some extraordinary method. Perhaps, too, it was upon his disappearance and in the interest of continuing their relationship, the followers might have set up norms for the recruitment of new members which tested their eligibility.

Also, a successor was designated by the charismatically qualified administrative staff (that is the proved novices whose

- 
294. This interpretation is consistent with the old Chinese conception of the soul as simply dying.
295. Wherever war and big-game hunt occur, we may find the charismatic chieftain, the "warlord," as Weber called him. "The charisma of the warlord rises and falls with its efficacy and also with the demand for it," Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1142.
296. According to Weber, "charismatic leadership.... if it wants to transform itself into a perennial institution, the first basic problem is that of finding a successor to the prophet, hero, teacher or party leader. Given the nature of charisma, a free election of a successor is originally not possible, only the acknowledgement that the pretender actually has charisma. Hence, the followers may have to wait for the epiphany of a personally qualified successor, temporal representative or prophet." Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 1123-5. Presumably, it would have easily occurred to the followers that they "are best suited to recognize the qualified successor" since they too would have experienced a rebirth. Ibid., pp. 1123-5.

charisma had been awakened and tested and who had been chosen to certify that charisma of the new recruits had been awakened and tested as well) and possibly recognized by the community.<sup>297</sup> Weber's understanding was that

a genuine charismatic leader is in a position to oppose this type of prerequisite for membership; his successor is not free to do so, at least if he is chosen by the administrative staff.<sup>298</sup>

He also specifically mentioned how

this type (of charismatic leader) is illustrated by the magical warrior asceticism of the "men's house" with initiation ceremonies and age groups. An individual who has not successfully gone through the initiation remains a "woman," that is, he is excluded from the charismatic group.<sup>299</sup>

What might have changed in these communities between the rather early stage of symbolism when the parties to the consociation to organize a raid performed a straightforward

---

297. Weber explains that when a "charismatic organization undergoes progressive rationalization, it is readily possible that, instead of recognition being treated as a consequence of legitimacy, it is treated as the basis of legitimacy: **democratic legitimacy**. Then designation of a successor by an administrative staff becomes 'preselection,' .... whereas recognition by the group becomes an 'election.' Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 266-71.

298. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 249-50.

299. Ibid., pp. 249-50.

magical act by which they indicated their willingness to temporarily assume a new quality (or status) and the rather late stage when a new soul was created by some animistic process or by some magical rite? Possibly, it was the view of the soul as simply dying once the raid was over. For Weber noticed that

where there exists a belief in a domain of the deceased ...it by no means follows that the existence of the souls there is conceived as eternal. For the souls ... may simply die, which is apparently the ancient Chinese view.<sup>300</sup>

Conceivably if Weber thought that the ancient Chinese view of the soul was unlike that of the educated Greek<sup>301</sup> in that it seemed to leave out qualities of existence after death, then it

---

300. Ibid., p. 520. Obviously, Weber had reason to suspect that the notion of the 'soul' was not strange to ancient Chinese thought as Marcel Granet would have us believe. Granet writes, "La notion d'âme, l'idée d'une essence entièrement spirituelle et qui s'opposerait au corps matériel est tout a fait étrangère à la pensée chinoise." Granet apparently was not aware either of the presence of the bachelor house in China or of the part of the ancient conception of the soul in its development, and he appears to have been somewhat skeptical of the possibility of the Chinese conceiving of a soul that would not be in opposition to the body. For Granet's discussion "de l'ame" see Marcel Granet, La Pensee Chinoise, (Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, 1934).

301. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 473. Apparently, Weber mentioned in several connections that "the educated Greek always remained a warrior, at least in theory. The simple animistic belief in the soul which left vague the qualities of existence after death and the entire question of the hereafter (though remaining certain that the most miserable status here on earth was preferable to ruling over Hades) remained the normal faith of the Greeks until the time of the complete destruction of their political autonomy."

also was his understanding that the basic qualities and the key questions of human life in these communities were not yet known. Fundamental doubt, in other words, had not begun to father such knowledge.

The "capping ceremony" may also have celebrated the circumstance of the young warriors passing the test that qualified them as political equals in territorial communities where the bearer of arms acknowledges "only those capable of bearing arms as political equals."<sup>302</sup> This would explain the fact that Weber was convinced that the bachelor house was where the "charismatic chief" resided. Diplomatic transactions were concluded on its premises (such as the surrender of enemies); weapons were stored there, and trophies (cut-off ears) were deposited as well.

Evidently, Weber suspected that the form of the process of designating a successor to the chief was atypical in that it could be interpreted as "election." To a charismatically elected chief in the manner of a 'prince' (with a following whose interests were vested in his proving himself) the trophies would have been a visible sign of his qualifying as a successor, and the weapons would have been the material means of his success. From the chief's standpoint, the trophies were a kind of insurance that the members of the community would not exercise their "right" to depose him so long as he continued to prove himself and the weapons were the material means of insuring that

---

302. Ibid, p. 906.

4the extraordinary force of charisma would be demonstrated.<sup>303</sup>

Weber found the charismatic chieftain or warlord wherever war and big-game hunting are present. Still, he did not find the permanent figure of the warlord unless there was a chronic state of war and presumably then not only a comprehensive military organization but also a territorial community to be protected. As Weber described these developments:

Where war and big game hunt are absent, the charismatic chieftain--the "war lord," as we wish to call him, in contrast to the chieftain of peace- is absent as well.... The charisma of the warlord may or may not be unstable in nature according to whether or not he proves himself and whether or not there is any need for a warlord. He becomes a permanent figure when warfare becomes a chronic state of affairs....The existence of the warlord as a regular figure certainly does not depend upon a tribal rule over subjects of other tribes or upon individual slaves. His existence depends solely upon a chronic state of war and upon a comprehensive organization set for warfare.<sup>304</sup>

What, then, convinced us of Weber's understanding that the bachelor house in China, like the men's house which Schurtz studied

with so much sympathetic care, and which in various forms, recurs in

---

303. Note that this interpretation may be consistent but is not the same as Weber's claim that "the heroic warrior and his followers seek booty; the elective ruler or the charismatic party leader requires the material means of power. The former in addition requires a brilliant display of his authority to bolster his prestige." Ibid., p. 244.

304. Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, pp. 251-2.

all parts of the world is one of those structures resulting eventually from such a consociation of warriors, or, in Schurtz's terminology, a men's league.<sup>305</sup>

Weber seems to have intentionally used Schurtz's language to make the point made earlier that

here in the men's house, the league<sup>306</sup> of young recruits practiced rhythmic (and that means disciplined) archery.<sup>307</sup>

Weber also mentions how,

according to the results, the prince chose his following and officers [hence the ceremonial significance of archery until recent times]. It is possible (even though not certain) that there ancestral spirits gave advice.<sup>308</sup>

Thus, while Weber credits Schurtz with having originally determined that the men's house is a type of structure resulting eventually from such a consociation, it seems that Weber was clear about having worked out for himself the actual details of the constitution of the bachelor house in China.

Weber observed that all magical lore has the character of secret know-how. Weber must have thought that the formal and specific activities or rituals associated with archery in

---

305. Weber, Economy and Society, p.906.

306. This is our emphasis.

307. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24.

308. Ibid., p.24.

prestige and monopolization.<sup>310</sup> This, however, does not explain how Weber could have conceived of the possible role of ancestral spirits within the organization?

In Weber's judgment, "rational discipline" is the most irresistible of all the forces "that lessen the importance of individual action."<sup>311</sup> Rational discipline eradicates not only personal charisma, but also eradicates stratification by status groups. Rational discipline, consists of a certain content:

the content of discipline is nothing  
but the consistently rationalized,  
methodically trained and exact execution

---

effective in bringing about the hero's rebirth were were also treated as secret know-how. Weber mentions that there are, however, aspects of this magical knowledge "everywhere become the material for the systematic instruction of other members of the group-at-large." Thus, it seems that the aspects which became the material for rational instruction in China were the rituals associated with archery and sports, for these were elements of "military training" capable of being taught to and learned by any one in varying degrees. Weber mentions that "the abolition of archery and other very old sports as elements of military training was made almost impossible" by the rites associated with them which probably originated in the bachelor house. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1143.

310. Ibid, p. 1143. Weber noticed that "as late as the Middle Ages, archery and charioteering were still considered general educational subjects for genteel children." What made the abolition of "age-old archery" as an element of military training almost impossible? The Gerth translation reads "the abolition of age old archery and of other very old sports as elements of "military" training was made almost impossible by the rites which in their beginnings probably were still connected with the "bachelor house." Thus, the Empress, when rejecting the reform proposals, makes references to these rites."

311. Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, pp. 253-55.

of the received order, in which all personal criticism is unconditionally suspended and the actor is unswervingly set for carrying out the command. In addition, this conduct under orders is uniform. Its quality as the communal action of a **mass** organization conditions the specific effects of such uniformity. Those who obey are not necessarily a simultaneous obedient or an especially large mass, nor are they necessarily united in a specific locality. What is decisive for discipline is that the obedience of a plurality of men is rationally uniform.<sup>312</sup>

By comparison, there is nothing about the behavior of warriors who practiced shooting their arrows in unison following the same sequence of bodily movements which would have warranted Weber's supposing that they attributed any importance to individual action. There was in the practice of rhythmic (that is disciplined) archery implied only formal training in shooting arrows which includes the following of a received order (rhythm) and a ceremonious occasion (the results achieved and, therefore, a visible standard) which allowed the prince to assess rationally who was better qualified to participate in a military action in the capacity of a 'follower' or 'officer.' There was a stratification by status established in which personal charisma had no part.

Nonetheless, Weber did not think that a political leader in the manner of a prince (particularly if he were responding to an

---

312. Ibid., pp. 253-55

urgent administrative need for precise action<sup>313</sup>), could have chosen a following and officers according to the results without at least wondering if the organized action could be relied on. In effect, as a political leader, the prince would have "expected"<sup>314</sup> his followers to conform to the practice of shooting in unison on the battlefield as they had done off and that the officers would exercise the necessary compulsion if they did not. As a human being, however, the prince also would have known from experience that the men and officers might not do what was expected. In other words, Weber was certain that mere passion, however, genuinely felt, was not enough to make a "politician" of the prince unless passion as devotion to the "cause" of precise action also made commitment to that cause a guiding star. Weber explains,

A sense of proportion is needed. This is the decisive psychological quality of the politician: his ability to let realities work upon him with inner concentration and

- 
313. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 291, explains how "administration by notables is found in all kinds of organizations. It is, for instance, typical of political parties which are not highly bureaucratized. It always means an extensive rather than an intensive type of administration. When there are very urgent economic administrative needs for precise action, though it is free to the group as such, it is hence often very expensive for individual members." In this instance, the role akin to that of a notable seems to have cost the "members" the self-consciousness of themselves as individuals and, hence, the recognition of a subject object dichotomy.
314. A wish is implied here. For if the prince actually expected the warriors to conform, there would have been no need to choose officers.

calmness. Hence, his **distance** to things and men.<sup>315</sup>

### 3. The Role of Ancestral Spirits

Under these circumstances, we can understand how Weber might have conceived of the possible (though not certain) role of ancestral spirits giving advice.<sup>316</sup> According to Weber, "even Homer, as an oft-quoted passage indicates, knew of the beginnings of discipline with its prohibition of fighting out of line."<sup>317</sup> Obviously, Weber thought that there was implied in the prince's choices such a prohibition. For Rome, he explains,

the important turning point is symbolized by the legend of the execution of the consul's son, who, in accordance with the ancient fashion of heroes, had slain the opposing war lord in individual combat (but had not followed authority).<sup>318</sup>

For China, the imagined presence of ancestral spirits serving as advisors did not represent the important turning point away from individual hero combat and towards disciplined fighting. Rather, it suggested a continuous line of "authority" deriving from practical knowledge and experience. In effect, their imagined presence not only would have given to the continuity of experience a certain meaning e.g., the continuity of blood, but also would have evoked the extraordinary feeling of

---

315. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," p. 115.

316. Weber, The Religion of China, pp. 24, 87, See also Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p. 302

317. Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 256.

318. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1151.

belonging together from knowing they traverse the same path as their ancestors. Thus, so far as we have been able to determine the role of ancestral spirits giving advice resembles that of the notable, the patriarchal master, the ethical prophet, the exemplary prophet, the adult, the elder child, the politician but, as it seems, to every conceivable type of leadership role, including that of the scientist.

The role of ancestral spirits derives from "honor". Unlike the honor of the "notable" (that is, one personally "distinguished among neighbors through property, education or style of life"),<sup>319</sup> however, the role derives from the sort of honor bestowed upon "elders"<sup>320</sup> of the community by virtue of the gratuitous service which they offer in view of their wider experience and the objective usefulness of their knowledge. Thus, unlike the power of command appearing in a rather innocent garb when the ruler is regarded as a (personal) servant by the ruled, authority possibly appeared in a completely innocent garb in the sense that these masters in the hereafter were thought merely to be servants or functionaries of the organization.<sup>321</sup>

As in the household, the role suggested by ancestral spirits giving advice bears a resemblance to the authority ("of

---

319. Weber, Economy and society, p. 1009.

320. Ibid., p. 950. "Where all members of a community are in about the same economic position, the 'elders' are simply those oldest in the household, the clan, or the neighborhood."

321. Ibid., p. 948.

men as against women and children; of the able-bodied as against those of lesser capability; of the adult as against the child, of the old as against the young,"<sup>322)</sup> but only to the extent that such authority derives from practical knowledge and experience and not from greater strength.<sup>323</sup>

As in the family, the role possibly played by advice-giving ancestral spirits resembles that of a patriarchal master "designated by a definite rule of inheritance."<sup>324</sup> However, unlike the patriarchal master, an administrative role was the universal fate of every member, if not in this world than in the next. In effect, Weber's understanding seems to have been that the bachelor house was an organization partly by virtue of the sanctity of the organizing principle which the role of ancestral spirits represented.

Like the ethical prophet who serves as an "instrument for the proclamation of a god and his will,"<sup>325</sup> the imagined presence of ancestral spirits offering words to the wise served as a device whereby the warriors were gently reminded to follow "in line" in keeping with the line of blood. The role serves, in

---

322. Ibid, p. 359.

323. Ibid. pp. 358-59. In Weber's estimation, the household "is the fundamental basis of loyalty and authority, which in turn is the basis of many other groups. This 'authority' is of two kinds: (1) the authority derived from superior strength; and (2) the authority derived from practical knowledge and experience."

324. Ibid., p. 231.

325. Ibid., p. 447.

other words, "as a means of canvassing votes and winning over others"<sup>326</sup> not to a personal standpoint or personal political view but to interests that concern the community as a whole. Thus, while the soil of contemplative thought may be loosened, it is not personally enriched. Instead, the human being appears to be lost in an infinite progression which in theory never comes to an end, which has no beginning, and in which neither life nor death have any meaning. The human being, however, only appears to be lost. For like the prophet who is an exemplary man, the role directs itself to a certain craving.<sup>327</sup> It is not the craving for salvation to which the exemplary prophet addresses himself but rather, as it seems, to the human craving for immortality expressed as a fundamental principle or sacred truth of organization. Weber found that this was the beginning of the intellectualizing of "culture" (i.e., meaning). At this point, there was no "apparently"<sup>328</sup> irreconcilable tension"<sup>329</sup> between religion and intellectual knowledge. The correspondence between religion and intellectual knowledge is clear. The imagined role

---

326. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 145.

327. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 447. The preaching of the prophet who is an exemplary man, as Weber noted, "says nothing about a divine mission or an ethical duty, but rather directs itself to the self-interest of those who crave salvation, recommending to them the same path as he himself traversed."

328. This emphasis is mine.

329. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 350.

of ancestral spirits gave to the continuity of experience the meaning of the continuity of blood. "Religion," from Weber's standpoint, "claims to offer an ultimate stand towards the world by virtue of a direct grasp of the world's 'meaning'."<sup>330</sup> In Weber's opinion, intellectual knowledge is concerned with "what is or what should be."<sup>331</sup> What was offered here was a religious stand toward immediate experience, an attempt to grasp its meaning by means of an analogy to the continuity of blood that links human beings with their ancestors. In this instance, what is and what it means were indistinguishable. In effect, the tension between 'religion' and 'intellectual knowledge' is missing. Thus, despite the absence of "the apparently irreconcilable tension between religion and intellectual knowledge," it seems that a corner had been turned towards thinking of cause and effect in abstract terms and once turned there was no turning back.

If all this is true, reports of an original matrilineal descent agree with it.<sup>332</sup> "Matriarchy", so far as Weber could ascertain "seems primarily to have resulted from the father's military estrangement from family life."<sup>333</sup> In other words, matriarchy in China, was equivalent to the kind of self-sufficient family that survived despite the father's absence.

---

330. Ibid., p,352.

331. Ibid., p. 352.

332. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24.

333. Ibid., p. 24.

Weber observe that matriarchy ("mother right") as a technical term should be limited to the phenomenon of matrilineal attribution where

the children belong to the mother's kin as her exogamous sex group and are subject to the rules of revenge and inheritance of her group.<sup>334</sup>

Evidently, Weber could not determine whether or not matriarchy did, in fact, exist in China solely on the basis of the father's alienation from family life. The fact, however, that Weber's understanding of the development of the bachelor house is merely hypothetical and, if true, transpired in an age that in Weber's estimation, "was very remote in historical time"<sup>335</sup> does not diminish its significance. To be precise, Weber wrote that

the ancient Chinese sacred military organization on the one hand, the Lamaist monastic ascetic organization with its tribute-paying and dispensing subjects on the other, here achieved culture on territory, which from the standpoint of capitalistic rentability was partially extensive eternal pasture, partly simply desert, not the sort of place to support great construction and artistic production.<sup>336</sup>

On one hand, Weber appears to have had in mind the achievements of the Lamaism monastic organization when he observed that monasticism almost always accomplishes the economically unfeasible. In a discussion of "The Religious-

---

334. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 368.

335. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 24.

336. Weber, The Religion of India, p. 289-290.

Charismatic and the Rational Achievements of Monasticism,"<sup>337</sup> Weber acknowledged that the Mormon achievements in the salt desert of Utah defy all rules of rational settlement. He also suggested that this is not unusual.<sup>338</sup> This is, he wrote,

all the more typical of the monastic achievements, which almost always accomplish that which appears economically not feasible. Lamaism monasticism produced economic and architectural wonder that in magnitude, and apparently also in quality, measure up to the largest and most famous artifacts of men: witness the Potala (Palace in Lhasa).<sup>339</sup>

What the Lamas had accomplished in Tibet seemed unfeasible to Weber specifically from the economic standpoint of satisfying the desire for "utilities" with the resources that the land naturally rendered. His own words were that Tibet is a country that seems

condemned by nature to be an eternal desert; but a community of celibate ascetics carried out colossal construction works in Lhasa and saturated the country with the religious doctrines of Buddhism.<sup>340</sup>

It would appear, however, that in the course of investigating the penetration of Buddhism<sup>341</sup> into Inner Asia,

---

337. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 1168-70.

338. Ibid., pp. 1168-70.

339. Ibid., pp. 1168-70.

340. Weber, General Economic History, p. 267.

341. Buddhism (like Jainism) was an absolutely pacifist religion of salvation which "exerted a culturally revolutionizing influence from Ceylon

Weber determined that while economic change brought about by the influx of propertied strata made it possible for "great" works to be produced, these works could not have been realized without the unified culture that the Lamaistic hierarchy represented. Weber concluded that

the development of an ever more inclusive religious literature, like the ever increasing storing up of first rank works of art in the pasture and desert territory, some 5000 meters above sea level with a frozen earth eight months of the year and with a pure nomadic people (was) under the circumstances so significant an achievement that it only could have been achieved under the hierarchic, rigidly organized Lamaistic monastic Buddhism with its boundless power over the laity.<sup>342</sup>

On the other hand, Weber concluded that "even in the ('men's house') of prehistoric militaristic times"<sup>343</sup> before the economic organization of the sib was constituted, "ancestral spirits seem

---

and India across Tibet to Siberia including China, Korea, and Japan." Actual Buddhist missions into these regions began approximately in the seventh century A.D. and were officially established in the eighth century. For a discussion of the penetration of Buddhism into Inner Asia, see Weber, The Religion of India, pp. 88, 192, 282-90.

342. Weber, The Religion of India, pp. 289-90.

343. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 87. Gerth obviously was mistaken in translating "mannherhaus" as "long house" and seems to have been using the terms as if they were synonomous. See pp. 70-71 of this work for a discussion of the long-house of the Iroquois where agricultural work is assembled as distinct from the military organization of the men's house.

to have played a role."<sup>344</sup> Here was a phenomenon whose importance to the formal achievement of culture could definitely be ascertained.<sup>345</sup> For there is in the very conception of ancestral spirits performing such a role the idea that the bachelor house is inhabited by the spirits of persons who have lived on and to whom the inhabitants are related by blood. There is also the implication that the spirits of the warriors, with their practical knowledge and experience, serve the men's house and that their gratuitous service cannot be offered by the chief or by the other residents. Hence, from Weber's standpoint, 'authority'<sup>346</sup> not only appeared in a completely innocent garb in the sense of an imagined presence of masters in the hereafter<sup>347</sup>

---

344. Ibid., p. 87.

345. Although there were phenomena which Weber mentions as being of incalculable importance to the substantive evolution of culture, the imagining of ancestral spirits giving advice was not one of them. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 405-6. The formal "evolution" of culture was contingent upon the warriors' perception of the continuity of experience.

346. This is consistent with Weber's understanding of household authority in the sense that ancestral spirits serve as advisors even though such an authority is realized in the absence of the power to command and the duty to obey. Referring to household authority, Weber mentions that "this 'authority' (Weber uses quotes) is of two kinds." One kind is the "authority derived from practical knowledge and experience." The other kind is "the authority derived from superior strength." Weber, Economy and Society, p. 358- 59.

347. It seems that Weber was using the term "hereafter" which appears in the Gerth translation in the legal sense of the "the time of its taking effect." In the version appearing in Economy and Society, edited by Roth and Wittich, the word that

gratuitously serving the organization with their practical knowledge and experience.<sup>348</sup> The effect was to create a genuine sense of affinity of the blood relationship.

Thus, we can understand Weber's mentioning in passing that "the existence of the [bachelor house] hardly seems consistent with true totemism."<sup>349</sup> So far as Weber was concerned totemism is the kind of specific association of an object with a particular group where in its clearest expression an animal has become a symbol of brotherhood. Originally, Weber explains, the totemic "animal symbolized the common possession by the group of the spirit of the animal, after it had been consumed"<sup>350</sup> by all the members. Hence, the members constituted a fraternity merely in the superficial sense of having in concert ingested the same object. Writes Weber:

It is possible that both forms of the bachelor house, the "cooperative" and the "authoritarian" one, existed side by side in different regions. On the whole, evidence compiled by Quistorp... speaks rather for the former type. But note that the legendary Emperor Yao handed the government over to his successor Shun in the ancestor-hall. One emperor threatened his vassals by pointing to

---

appears is "otherworldly" which obviously is not accurate because the term implies an understanding not only of the present but also a grasp of a future world beyond the present which from Weber's standpoint, the warriors would not have had in the pre-historic period when the men's house was constituted.

348. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 948.

349. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 87.

350. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 433-35.

the wrath of their ancestral spirits. Such examples, compiled by Hirth in his **Ancient History of China**, support the assumption of the authoritarian type of bachelor house as do Emperor Paan Keng's in the **Shu Ching** .... and the apparition of an emperor's ancestral spirits demanding an explanation for his abuse of power. Totemist survivals are listed by Conrady, ... Although important, they are entirely unconvincing.<sup>351</sup>

From Weber's standpoint Quistorp ("a disciple of Conrady"<sup>352</sup>) was prevented from conducting a detached analysis of the facts by a blind faith in Conrady's judgment. Weber admits that only an expert could assess whether or not totemism had ever prevailed in China and Weber admittedly was not an expert. And in Weber's estimation, Conrady merely assumed the prevalence of totemism. In fact, Weber was willing to accept Otto Franke's assessment of the situation which was based on an examination of the sources and the literary controversy. According to Franke, "that there is evidence enough of totemist survivals up to the 12th Century. ("Today they have vanished")."<sup>353</sup> The point is that Weber surmised that whether or not totemism ever existed in China, had no bearing on the achievement of culture his main concern.

Now we can understand how, in Weber's estimation, the authoritative role of ancestral spirits "suggests the probability that the [bachelor house], the most ancient form of organization,

---

351. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 275.

352. Ibid., pp. 250-97.

353. Ibid., pp. 250-97.

can be deduced from the routinization of hereditary charisma of the prince and his war following."<sup>354</sup> For if the part that ancestral spirits played had the effect of creating the sense of affinity of the blood relationship, then the rational way to preserve the relationship (consistent with property being kept within the organization) is by believing in hereditary succession. In other words, the idea of a blood tie had gained a significance and in that sense culture was created. In Weber's own words, "The ancient sacred Chinese military organization achieved culture."<sup>355</sup>

Weber found that the most visible effect of religious views upon life conduct and hence "upon economic activity was generally stereotyping."<sup>356</sup> Referring to the religious views that have had this effect, Weber observed:

The alteration of any practice which is somehow executed under the protection of supernatural forces may affect the interests of spirits and gods. To the natural uncertainties and resistances facing every innovator, religion thus adds powerful impediments of its own. The sacred is the uniquely unalterable.<sup>357</sup>

In the bachelor house, "religion" provided the innovator with the kind of assistance of which he could be certain the

---

354. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 87.

355. Weber, The Religion of India, pp. 290-90. Weber's discussion of the concept of meaning can be found in Economy and Society, Chapter I.

356. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 406.

357. Ibid., p. 406.

"sacred" that is commonly unalterable. It was not a matter of an old idea being reborn but of the birth of a new one with the introduction of the role of ancestral spirits. With the rationalization of the idea of common ancestry, the knowledge that literally belonged to everyman became irrelevant. Thus, what the ancient Chinese sacred military organization had achieved that was impossible from an economic point of view, was inevitable from a religious standpoint. In effect, Weber had determined that the sacred, man's greatest artistic achievement, was independently conceived in China. The religious idea of common ancestry was a human creation, despite its seemingly universal application. Perhaps then the achievement of culture was the result of a sequence of developments in which 'knowledge' had a part. Nonetheless, in the absence of an object of perception, the knowledge may not be considered genuine empirical knowledge. For a moment, the members of the organization had known the feeling of belonging together. With rationalization, however, the substance of the knowledge of common ancestry was lost. The form expressed the external working together of clan associates and the support that ancestral spirits offered. Thus, the unity in thinking of life and of worldly events as magically derived was made only more complicated by the fact that new experiences that mean something had come to play a role in life.<sup>358</sup> Why then did a prince responding to the question "what if...." introduce the role of ancestral spirits. Weber had

---

358. See Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 403-404, 411.

determined that the question of the origins of the "sacred" as an organizing principle, unlike the question of the origins of civilization, is one we will not know the answer to.

## Chapter 5

## THE FOUNDING OF A CIVILIZATION

The appearance of the expression 'civilization' in the title of this chapter is not meant to be abstract. In the so-called "Author's Introduction"<sup>359</sup> to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber mentions in the context of having ascertained from economic documents, that both "capitalism" and "capitalistic enterprises" in the sense of the adaptation of economic action to the results of a comparison of money income and money expenses,

have existed in all civilized countries of the earth...China, India, Babylon, Egypt, and Mediterranean antiquity, and the Middle Ages, as well as in modern times.<sup>360</sup>

It seems that China was one of the regions where a civilization was born in ancient times. What then did Weber understand by civilization? Quite possibly had Weber initially attempted to give anything like a general definition, then the circumstances beginning with the arrival of the horse in the sixteenth century B.C. would not have been worked out.

---

359. This essay was actually the introduction to the series of studies which Weber entitled Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie to which we referred earlier.

360. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 19.

### 1. The Arrival of the Horse

Weber refers in a footnote to an "(alleged) tax reform plan" that was mentioned in the Annals (which were "collections of precedents")<sup>361</sup>. The plan, dating from the twelfth century B.C., called for 10,000 war chariots per 1000 square li, according to the translator.<sup>362</sup> Analogies from events that transpired in the Middle East convinced Weber of the arrival of the horse drawing the war chariot was several centuries before this plan was devised.<sup>363</sup> More precisely, Weber observed that

because the nature of military and administrative technology of the time precluded it, before the seventeenth century B.C., a lasting political conquest was impossible for either of the great cultural centers. The horse, for instance, while not completely absent, at least, not in Mesopotamia, had not as yet been converted into an implement of special military technique. This occurred during those peoples' movements which established the rule of Hyksos in Egypt and the dominion of the Kassites in Mesopotamia. The technique of chariot warfare emerged only then, providing the opportunity and incentive to great conquest expeditions into distant regions.<sup>364</sup>

Weber knew of the horse's presence in Mesopotamia before the

---

361. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 41.

362. Note that 1 li is equivalent to 537 meters which is about equivalent to 178 feet. See Weber. The Religion of China, p. 265.

363. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 265.

364. Weber, Ancient Judaism, p. 6. The interesting question of how Weber learned about about the emergence of the technique of chariot warfare during these peoples movements will remain unanswered.

seventeenth century B.C. He was not able to determine whether or not the horse was present in Egypt before then. What he had ascertained was that the idea of converting the horse into that implement of military technique specific to individual hero combat arose independently in both peoples movements taking place in the Far East during the seventeenth century B.C. The horse drawn chariot, in other words, originated in the Middle East and from there made its way to China, which is why the comparison to the Middle East was made. Weber's reasoning is clear: if the horse was converted into a special implement of military technology in the Middle East during the seventeenth century B.C., and if the horse drawn-chariot was brought from there into China, then the technology of chariot warfare did not reach China until sometime later. We assume that Weber's estimate of the arrival of the horse drawn chariot in China by the sixteenth century B.C. is based on further comparisons of developments in China with developments elsewhere. For Weber appears reasonably certain that

individual hero combat, which in China, as well as apparently all over the world (to Ireland), was brought to a peak by utilizing the horse originally as a draft animal, led to the decay of the bachelor houses which were oriented toward infantry: and the highly trained and expensively armed solitary hero became prominent.<sup>365</sup>

Obviously with the appearance of individual hero combat, the importance of footsoldiering declined as did the organization of

---

365. Ibid.

the bachelor house of foot soldiers. Yet, neither the soldier nor his organization seems to have altogether disappeared from the war scene. Rather, the solitary hero, trained and furnished with costly armor, stood conspicuously in the foreground.<sup>365</sup> Assisted by horse drawn chariots, individual hero combat was carried to the limit beyond which it could not go without the warriors perceiving that they risked complete annihilation.

Perhaps then Weber would have preferred to think not only of the epoch of knightly chariot fighting as a transitional phase in a line of development having universal significance and value, but also of what transpired in China (and presumably in other parts of the world) as demonstrating that humans are essentially rational beings and that civilization, therefore, is inevitable. For Weber admittedly was a product of "modern" Western civilization, and he would have seen the ultimate value of reason as consistent with modern views of causality. Perhaps then what Weber meant to suggest<sup>366</sup> when he indicated that "this 'Homeric' age of China was also very remote in historical time"<sup>367</sup> (as were the bachelor houses where the idea of ancestral spirits giving

---

365. Weber, "Konfuzianismus und Taoismus." Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p.302-3.

366. Why Weber left implicit the fact that he had discovered that in the case of China civilization was not inevitable is not clear.

367. Weber, Religion of China, p.24.

advice, the basis of the "old folk beliefs,"<sup>368</sup> seems to have originated) was that particularly in the case of China the assumption that human beings are essentially rational beings would have interfered with a detached analysis.

## 2. China's "Homeric" Age

Certainly, knightly chariot fighting, was an important element of the "Homeric" age in China. The hero of the epoch of knightly chariot common to all peoples from China and India to Ireland apparently bore an external resemblance to the hero of the Homeric epics by faring forth into battle in a horse drawn chariot. Writes Weber,

the horse brought the war chariot and with it the hero driving into combat and possibly fighting from his chariot. The hero has been dominant in the warfare of the Oriental, Indian, and ancient Chinese kings, as well as throughout Occidental societies, including the Celtic.<sup>369</sup>

Yet, Weber did not consider of the epoch of knightly chariot fighting common to the warfare of "kings" in all these regions as being synonymous with a Homeric age. Weber mentions,

---

368. *Ibid.*, p. 231. Note that Gerth assumes that by "Volksglaube" Weber meant "the old popular beliefs." To us, however, the notion of a popular belief connotes one that is of general currency and, hence, in vogue at the moment, a simple belief that is easy to understand and might even suggest vulgarity. None of these connotations apply to this complex notion which was the basis of the original clan association.

369. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 1150-51.

for instance, how "in the oldest sources"<sup>370</sup> he was able to discern the first beginnings of military organization in India.<sup>371</sup> Weber found "castle-dwelling kings of the Homeric type with their sibs<sup>372</sup> and followings (king's men)."<sup>373</sup> As it seems, what survived in these epic times were only traces of the sorts of charismatic heroism known to be widespread amongst such heroes as the Nordic berserks (whose ecstasy made "them plunge

370. It is not clear at this point if Weber meant "the oldest sources" available to him or "the oldest sources" known.

371. Weber does not provide a date at this point.

372. In a discussion entitled "The Evolution of the Clan" in General Economic History Weber indicates that "the Gaelic word clan means 'blood kindred,' and like the corresponding German word **sippe** is identical with the Latin **proles**." However, Weber suggests by distinguishing different sorts of clans that the clan is never initially a blood kinship group. Rather, there are two different avenues of clan development into a blood kinship group: from totemic clans or from military clans (phratries) "which are associations such as originally occupied a men's house." Thus, Weber's understanding seems to have been that it would be appropriate to use the corresponding word **sib** only if and when the clan represented a blood kinship group. Obviously then in translating Weber from German to english it becomes the translator's responsibility to assess, in each instance, what Weber meant when he employed the term **sippe**. Did he mean clan in the sense of magical kinship (totemic clans), military group, or blood kinship? Since Weber subsequently suggests that in the epic period of kings in India the military clans had vanished, we can assume that Weber was actually referring to the blood relatives of kings who also were obliged to perform the duty of blood vengeance. For Weber's discussion of the clan's so-called evolution, see General Economic History, p. 49-50.

373. Ibid., p. 49-50.

themselves into the midst of the enemy in a frenzy of blood-lust and...half unconsciously slaughter whatever is around them"), the Israelite Moshuahs (saviors)<sup>374</sup>, and "the charismatic 'degen'<sup>375</sup> of charismatic warrior chieftains." Weber apparently found evidence in the old sources of kings and their retinues who outwardly resembled the Greek fortress kings with their horses and with their treasure hordes and who inwardly appear to be driven by the same feelings<sup>376</sup> as all heroes. Nonetheless, he apparently did not find the very same attitude. Weber writes, "The Vedas contain nothing about divine and human affairs fundamental to Hinduism."<sup>377</sup> However, Weber found that they did

---

374. Weber, Ancient Judaism, p. 231. Weber explains, how "among people under political pressure, like the Israelites, the title 'savior' (Moshuah) was originally attached to saviors from political distress, as transmitted by hero sagas (Gideon, Jephthah). The 'Messianic' promises were determined by these sagas. With this people, and in this clear-cut fashion only among them and under other very particular conditions, the suffering of a people's community, rather than the suffering of an individual, became the object of hope for religious salvation. The rule was that the saviour bore an individual and universal character for the individual and to every individual who would turn to him." It is the pain felt by those in distress and the individual hero's accomplishment as a "redeemer" (that is "a savior in grave war emergencies").

375. I have not been able to determine what Weber was referring to at this point.

376. See Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber-Essays in Sociology, p.330 for a discussion of the euphoric feeling of ecstasy.

377. Weber, The Religion of India, pp. 25- 29. The question of the approximate date of the Vedas, is not offered by Weber at this point. Note that the Vedas, as indicated to me by Sidney Aronson, "are known as the "first Bible" of Hinduism."

contain something about divine and human affairs before "Hinduism" as a "book religion" was officially constituted. Weber noticed that

the gods of the Vedas are functional and hero gods, externally similar to those of Homer. The Vedic hero is a castle-dwelling, charioteering warrior-king with a war band of the Homeric type and with a similar accompaniment of predominantly cattle-breeding yeomen.<sup>378</sup>

Yet, he did not refer to the Indian epoch of knightly chariot-fighting as "Homeric." Rather, Weber went on to explain

The great Vedic gods, especially the two greatest in their opposed characteristics are Indra and Varuna. Indra, the god of the thunderstorm, was (like Jahveh) a passionately active war and hero god, and, thereby, god of the irrational fate of heroes. Varuna was the wise, omniscient, functional god of eternal order, particularly legal order.<sup>379</sup>

Weber learned that ancient Indian singers, who depended upon gifts from kings and heroes, practiced "henotheism."<sup>380</sup> According to Weber, they referred "to the god appealed to as the mightiest or only god in order to win his favor."<sup>381</sup> Evidently, there were occasions when the Vedic kings, like the heroes during the age of Homer were contemptuous of the gods, but they must have deferred to the gods on occasion if the singers sometimes appealed to

---

378. Weber, The Religion of India, p. 28.

379. Weber, Ibid., p. 27.

380. Ibid., p. 27.

381. Ibid., p. 27.

Varuna presumably on their behalf. In fact, Weber observed how

the hero maintains his superior position in spite of the gods and not because of them, and indeed he often does this against their wishes. Such an attitude is evinced in the Homeric and in some of the Hindu epics.<sup>382</sup>

Weber apparently thought that the treatment of the gods by the Vedic kings was consistent with the practice of "henotheism" and hence unlike that of "the early Hellenic nobility, which treated the gods with complete lack of respect."<sup>383</sup> He obviously was aware that this was not the only attitude manifest in the Hindu epics. Perhaps then Weber meant by referring to China's 'Homeric' age that the hero in China not only bore an external resemblance to the hero of the Homeric epics, but also resembled him inwardly insofar as an attitude of complete irreverence toward the gods is concerned. The hero of the Homeric epics also defied the gods so as to assert his superiority.<sup>384</sup> Even though

---

382. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 491.

383. Ibid., p. 1178.

384. Weber, Economy and Society. p.1360. In Economy and Society, p.1145, Weber mentions that "it was only in part a fateful historical accident that Homer, the literary product of a secular aristocracy which was the most irreverent toward the gods, remained the major vehicle of literary education- which explains Plato's deep hatred against him- and prevented any theological rationalization of the religious powers. The decisive fact was the complete absence of a clerical system of education." Yet, that same aristocracy that was so irreverent toward the gods obviously supported the theological rationalization of the political powers. Weber declared, that with the moralizing of Hesiod ("the first and only theologian of official Greek literature," Ibid., p.469) theological

he was never quite free of the gods, he was not inhibited by them either. Weber characterizes the relationship of the nobility to the gods in the Homeric period as being

completely unrestrained .... in spite of a certain fearful respect (deisidaimonia)- to the gods whose treatment in the epics was so painful to Plato (e.g., Republic, bk.11,376E-385B).<sup>385</sup>

Weber determined that the attitude of irreverence towards the gods was not genuine or else the fearful respect would have been missing. As Weber noted, "Understandable to the Hellenic child (as to any child) were the Homeric heroes: to the Indian child the related parts of the Mahabharata."<sup>386</sup> An attitude of genuine irreverence might have resulted in conduct too treacherous and wicked for an innocent child to comprehend. Perhaps then it was Weber's understanding that the relationship of the nobility to the God of Heaven in China's Homeric period was not only unrestrained, but that their attitude was one of genuine

---

rationalism began to unfold albeit to a greatly limited extent. Ibid., p. 441, 500. Presumably, then, Hesiod was not officially recognized until Homer's influence had waned since, Weber observed, that "the ancient Mediterranean polis ... did not rationalize religion, in part because of Homer's influence as the accepted means of literary education." Note Weber's observation of "the far-reaching freedom of movement prevailing in Hesiod's days (probably 8th century B.C.)" Ibid., p. 1360. Theological rationalization of the religious powers in China occurred eight centuries earlier.

385. Ibid., p.1284.

386. Weber, Ancient Judaism, pp. 397-98. The Mahabharata was one of the two main epics of India in ancient times.

irreverence. For this would explain why Weber (in what may seem to be his only discussion of child development) makes no mention of the hero to which the songs of the Shu Ching originally referred.

Weber identifies the external circumstances under which such an inner relationship to the gods could have evolved. In Weber's judgment,

this lack of religious respect of the heroic society could arise only in the wake of migrations, especially of overseas migrations, and thus in areas in which the people did not have to live with old temples and close to the ancestral graves.<sup>387</sup>

Thus, assuming that the importation of the technique of chariot warfare into China and India provided the opportunity and incentive to great conquering expeditions into regions more distant from the places where ancestral spirits were known to dwell, then the attitude of genuine irreverence towards the god also could have arisen in China. Why then did such an attitude arise in China and not in India in the wake of similar migrations? Weber seems to attribute this difference to "quite concrete, thus 'accidental' circumstances"<sup>388</sup> which influenced developments.

Apparently, the economic transactions of the sib resulted in the importation of the horse together with the technology of chariot warfare into China. The sibs had accumulated enough

---

387. Weber, Economy and society, p. 1284.

388. Weber, The Religion of India, p. 141.

'stock' to exchange for the war chariots and horses which were costly.<sup>389</sup>

The sibs, thereby, supplied their warriors with the kind of military technology that allowed only for individual and not for disciplined combat. Yet, Weber suggests that the importation of the horse was not decisive in China as it was at the beginning of the known history of the Near East (Mesopotamia)<sup>390</sup> and of the Occident in establishing an individualist social order.<sup>391</sup> Rather, Weber recalls that "the sib, which, according to a documentary note, furnished the war chariots, was basic to the ancient status structure."<sup>392</sup>

Unlike the hero of the Homeric epics who rode into battle in his own chariot, the hero of China's Homeric age drove into battle in a chariot supplied to him by his sib association.

Weber explains how in Greece at the time of the archaic

---

389. See Max Weber, General Economic History, p. 152-53, for a discussion of the "lively gift trade between the Pharaohs and the Levantine rulers" as shown in the Tables of Tellel-Amarna, particularly after 1400 B.C. Notice Weber's careful wording of the fact that "the common objects of exchange were gold and war chariots against horses and slaves". Apparently, in Egypt at the time of the Pharaohs, the horse and chariot were not treated as a single unit to be traded.

390. Weber, The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations, p.38. Weber mentions that rule of the Hyksos in Egypt was established during the people's movements, the first time that the technique of chariot warfare was first employed. Weber, Ancient Judaism, p. 6.

391. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1151.

392. Weber, The Religion of China. p. 33.

polis, "the commoner ... may have been considered the social inferior of an aristocrat, but nevertheless he was militarily indispensable in so far as he provided his own weapons or served in a ship."<sup>393</sup> Could it be that the hero of China's Homeric age was not militarily indispensable since he neither furnished his own weapons nor served in a ship (where apparently every man counted)? It seems that what allowed Weber to entertain this thought was the possibility that anchorites were present in China even in the communities out of which the bachelor house arose.

### 3. The Old Anchorites

There have always been anchorites in China.<sup>394</sup> The philosopher Chuang-Tzu attested to their presence.<sup>395</sup> What concerns us is not their actual presence which, as Weber noted, "has ... been preserved in pictorial representations."<sup>396</sup> More

---

393. Weber, The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations, p. 209.

394. Ibid., p. 178.

395. Ibid., p. 178. He also indicated that "the Confucians themselves acknowledge them."

396. Ibid., pp. 178. Thus, perhaps, Weber assumes that the name Chuang-tzu or Tschung Tse (in the original German) is a composite of certain terms, which he defines in a footnote. To quote Gerth's translation of Weber which appears to misspell the Chinese terms in such a way that this connotation is lost, "Sheng means Saint; i, yin mean the segregated ones; Hsien, a sign composed of 'men' and 'mountain,' means anchorites." Ibid., p.290. To quote Weber directly, "Schi = Heilige, tun, jih, jin = Abgesonderte, Sien (Zeihen aus >>Mensch<< und >>Berg,,) = Anachoreten." Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, p. 463.

important, is Weber's mentioning that<sup>397</sup>

in a pure society of warriors, the "aged," considered worthless, were often left to exposure and it is quite possible that the anchorets were first recruited from among these groups.<sup>398</sup>

Weber acknowledges that this assumption is uncertain. Nonetheless, it does convey Weber's theory that while there have always been anchorets in China, there have not always been anchorets living a life of contemplation in the woods.<sup>399</sup> Originally, the anchorets were recruited from groups of warriors who had the common experience that perhaps no 'hero' mellowed by months, perhaps years, of fighting wars can avoid: the experience of being judged superfluous. These heroes may also have had the experience of being treated in a manner so contemptible as to suggest a total disrespect for life itself. They were left for dead.

---

397. Apparently, there were even notes leading Weber to assume "that ...(the heroes) and literati retired in old age to a solitary life in the woods." The Gerth translation reads that "that there are even notes leading us to assume that originally the early heroes and literati retired in old age to a solitary life in the woods." This is important, but only as a basis of comparison to the period with which we are concerned. For there does not appear to be any reference in the German version to "early heroes" or to their "original" retirement to a solitary life the woods. Thus, it seems that Weber was referring to the heroes of the feudal period which begins seven centuries later than the period with which we are concerned. Ibid., p. 178

398. Weber, The Religion of China, p.178.

399. Ibid., p. 178.

## 4. The Oldest Songs of the Shih Ching

Weber noticed how

even the oldest sections of the classic writings connected with the name of K'ung-tzu, that is, with Confucius as editor, permit us to recognize the conditions of charismatic warrior kings. (Confucius died in the year 478 B.C.) The heroic songs of the hymnbook (Shih Ching) tell of kings fighting from war chariots, as do the Hellenic and Indian epics. But considering their character as a whole, even these songs are no longer heralds of individual, and in general, purely human heroism as are the Homeric and German epics. Even when the Shi Ching was edited, the king's army had nothing of the romance of the warrior followings or of the Homeric adventures. The army already had the character of a disciplined bureaucracy, and above all it had "officers." The kings, even in the Shih Ching, no longer win simply because they are the greater heroes. And that is decisive for the spirit of the army. They win because they are morally right and because their charismatic virtues are superior, whereas their enemies are godless criminals who, by oppression and trespass upon the ancient customs have wronged their subject's weal and thus have forgone their charisma. Victory is the occasion for moralizing reflections rather than heroic joy. In contrast to the sacred scriptures of almost all other ethics, one is struck at once by the lack of any "shocking" expression, of any "indecent" image. Obviously, a very systematic expurgation has taken place here, and this may well have been the specific contribution of Confucius.<sup>400</sup>

It is not the specific contribution of Confucius that concerns us here. Confucius died more than a millennium after the horse was first encountered in China,<sup>401</sup> possibly the event that

---

400. *Ibid.*, p.113.

401. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Weber indicated that, " Confucius died in the year 478 B.C."

made possible the social order that did emerge within the region. At least this seems to have been the gist of what Weber meant when he pointed out that "the sib, which according to a documentary note originally furnished the war chariots, was basic to the ancient status order."<sup>402</sup> What concerns us is Weber's conviction that the heroic songs of the hymnbook (Shih Ching) once expressed an individual and basically innocent human heroism. Apparently, then, Weber was convinced that the king's army once had all the romance of warrior followings or of the Homeric adventures without the knowledge of tragedy with which such romance is associated even though when the Shih Ching was edited all of the romance was gone. These kings won simply because they were the greater heroes. Victory was an occasion for heroic joy, rather than an opportunity to reflect on the grim realities of war. Who then were these kings? Whence did they come?

#### 5. The Old Warrior Kings

The old warrior kings were primarily warlords whose dominion stemmed from charismatic heroism. Weber writes that "everywhere the king is primarily a warlord . . . . kingship originates in charismatic heroism."<sup>403</sup> Weber also maintained that

in the history of civilized peoples,  
kingship is not the oldest form of  
political domination, that is, a power

---

<sup>402</sup>. Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>403</sup>. Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," in Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 251.

transcending patriarchal authority and differing from it because it does not primarily direct the peaceful struggle of man with nature but the violent struggle of one community against another.<sup>404</sup>

Perhaps then in referring to the ancient Chinese kings, he meant to suggest that these kings did not belong to the history of civilized peoples, but rather to a "prehistoric" time in the history of the Chinese and of Chinese culture when there was no end to the violent struggle of one warlord and his following against another. It would appear that these kings also were political leaders in the manner of princes. Weber explains how

with the increase of princely power the spirit of the ploughland became the spirit of the princely territory. As is usually the case, when a stratum of noble heroes developed in China, then too a personal God of Heavens originated who by chance corresponded to the Hellenic Zeus....<sup>405</sup>

These were the men who having been estranged from their sibs viewed themselves not as sib, clan, phratry, or tribe members but merely as status peers.<sup>406</sup> Their heroism was not innocent, but it certainly was heroism of a naive sort if the kings and their followings fared forth into battle all quite sincerely believing that their superior position was deserved.<sup>407</sup> Thus, had it not

---

404. Ibid., p. 251.

405. Ibid., p. 33.

406. Ibid., p. 53.

407. For a discussion of the contrast between "naive primitive heroism" and "rational state systems" that inspired this discussion of the difference between naive and primitive heroism in light of developments in China see Gerth and Mills, From

been for the rise of an emperor (a charismatic warlord who might gain an ascendancy at their expense) this period of relative anarchy might have continued indefinitely. Weber states:

Originally imperial power was like a feudal suzerainty over the princes. Thus, sacrificial rites to Heaven became the monopoly of the emperor who was considered the "Son" of Heaven. The princes made sacrifices to the spirits of the land and to the ancestors; the heads of households made sacrifices to the ancestral spirits of their kinship group.<sup>408</sup>

Essentially feudalism ("which is a separation of powers")<sup>409</sup> is status consciousness.<sup>410</sup> Here then was a separation of magical powers and the kind of social order which did not recognize the importance of the individual or of individual action and in which personal honor had no part. Imperial power was like a feudal domination over the princes by virtue of their recognition of the emperor's extraordinary status group difference. Thus, of all the traits that Weber found not only to be characteristic of the Chinese and of Chinese culture but also to be "more closely to related Occidental phenomena than are the traits of Confucian China",<sup>411</sup> there were some that allowed Weber to identify the external circumstances under which the introduction of the horse led to the founding of an empire in China: namely, "the old folk

---

Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p.334-5.

408. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 22.

409. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1082.

410. Ibid., p. 1082.

411. Ibid., p. 231.

beliefs, the old anchorites, oldest songs of the Shih Ching, the old warrior kings."<sup>412</sup>

---

<sup>412</sup>. Ibid., p. 231.

## Chapter 6

## KNOWLEDGE OF THE CASE OF CHINESE THOUGHT

Clearly in Weber's use of the word "civilization" there is at least implied the coming out of a savage state. In China, there was a change of attitude toward the God of Heaven brought about by a kind of enlightenment. How did Weber come to understand the unbroken unity that this change expressed?

## 1. The Risk of Extinction

It was not an everyday psychological event for the ancient Chinese warrior to confront his own death or the irrationalities of human destiny. Indeed, Weber had reason to suspect that, up until the arrival of the horse, the warrior's life in the men's house and as a member of a clan association was actually free of the chances and adventures that filled the daily life of the Roman nobility during the age of Tacitus and of the Confucian mandarin. For in principle, every practice was sacred, hence, executed under the protection of ancestral spirits, the interests of the individual and of the association being indistinguishable. With the arrival of the horse, the warrior first needed to understand the meaning of facing death and the irrationalities of human destiny.<sup>413</sup> As Weber explained the situation,

---

<sup>413</sup>. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 472.

Charisma was always an extraordinary force (maga,orenda) and revealed in sorcery and heroism. The charismatic qualification of the novice was tested by trials in magical asceticism, or, given different ideas, it was acquired in the form of a "new soul." But originally the charismatic quality could be lost; the hero or magician could be "forsaken" by his spirit or God.<sup>414</sup>

Weber had concluded that when the warrior (equipped with costly arms by his sib) first rode forward alone onto the battlefield for the first time, he became aware of something personal that he might lose. And it was not something so concrete as his life. In the warrior's subjective conception of his loss, he could be left spiritless on the battlefield at any time.

Weber was aware that

as a rule, charisma is a highly individual quality. This implies that the mission and power of its bearer is qualitatively delimited from within, not by an external order.<sup>415</sup>

In China, however, Weber found an exception to this rule. Although charisma was a quality momentarily residing in the individual, it was not a highly individual quality. Charisma lacked a permanent personal foundation; its bearer had no personal mission. What he had was an accumulation of deeds. Charisma was not regarded as a permanent quality emanating from within but had to be cultivated from without. Weber writes, "Charisma seemed to be guaranteed only so long as it was

---

414. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 30.

415. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1112-13.

confirmed by recurrent miracles and heroic feats".<sup>416</sup> He knew that

in the case of a lost war, the "monarch" has to fear for his throne, republican power-builders and groups having vested interests in a "republican constitution" have to fear the victorious "general"...the majority of the propertied bourgeoisie have to fear economic loss from the brakes being placed upon "business as usual". Under certain circumstances, should disorganization follow defeat, the ruling stratum of notables has to fear a violent shift in power in favor of the propertyless.<sup>417</sup>

By comparison, Weber had determined, "the 'masses' subjectively risked a smaller stake in the game" of war than did other interest groups. "At least in their subjective conception and in the extreme case," Weber reported, the masses have "nothing concrete to lose but their lives."<sup>418</sup> The ancient Chinese warrior who rode forward alone onto the battlefield for the first time risked extinction in the sense of being rendered void of life, that is turned into a useless object.<sup>419</sup> Weber knew the warrior's stake in the game of war, therefore, could not be compared with that of the monarch, the republican power builders, the propertied bourgeoisie, and other other interests groups including the masses. For unlike them, his loss would be absolute.

---

416. Ibid., pp. 1112-13.

417. Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 171.

418. Ibid. p. 171..

419. The idea that the warrior risked becoming a useless object was suggested to me by Alfred Jones and needs to be confirmed.

Apparently Weber had surmised that it was neither inner weakness nor impotence that stood behind the warrior's gestures on the battlefield. Rather, so long as the warrior perceived this tragedy to be imminent, a sense of urgency would have pervaded his movements.

## 2. The Problem of Theodicy

Despite the elusive foundation to which "charisma" was moored, a stratum of noble heroes emerged. Weber found that the development of this stratum coincided with the emergence of a personal God of Heaven roughly corresponding to the Hellenic Zeus. Weber also observed that the pictorial representations of the God of Heaven, even more clearly than the "numerous features of the ambiguous official terminology, allow us to discern in the God of Heaven a being originally conceived as a person."<sup>420</sup>

Having already determined that a sense of honor or superiority was characteristic of the nonpriestly classes claiming the highest social privileges, in particular the "nobility,"<sup>421</sup> Weber was aware,

their sense of self-esteem rests on their awareness that the performance of their life pattern is an expression of their underived, ultimate, and qualitatively distinctive "being"; indeed, it is in the very nature of the case that this should be the basis of their feeling of worth.<sup>422</sup>

By comparison Weber knew that the sense of esteem of the

---

<sup>420</sup>. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 174.

<sup>421</sup>. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 490-1.

<sup>422</sup>. Ibid., p. 490-1.

ancient Chinese warrior initially rested, so to speak, for a brief moment, on the awareness that his performance of heroic deeds derived from qualitatively indistinct beings (spirits). Indeed, it was in the very nature of the case that any feeling of worth might not last beyond the moment since the warrior could be forsaken by his spirit at any time. The ancient Chinese warriors who continued to perform heroic deeds bore a resemblance to those who are disprivileged. As Weber explains,

the sense of honor of disprivileged classes rests on some guaranteed promise for the future which implies the assignment of function, mission, or vocation to them. What they cannot claim to be, they replace by the worth of that which they will one day become, to which they will be called in some future life here or hereafter; or replace, very often concomitantly with the motivation just discussed, by their sense of what they signify and achieve in the world as seen from the point of view of providence. Their hunger for a worthiness that has not fallen to their lot they and their world being what it is, produces this conception from which is derived the rationalistic idea of a providence, a significance in the eyes of some divine authority possessing a scale of values different from the ones operating in world of man.<sup>423</sup>

Whereas there was no guarantee to the warrior of a future beyond the present, there was implied by the conception of a personal God as Lord of Heaven, a presence in the next. In effect, Weber learned by means of a comparison that the warriors did not replace what they could not claim to be by the worth of that which they would become. Instead, by means of the conception

---

<sup>423</sup>. Ibid, p. 491.

of a personal God of Heaven, the warrior's indeterminate fate in the here and now was joined to one extending into eternity. Weber had concluded that the warrior's hunger for worthiness continuing to befall his lot gave rise to an answer to the question of why his indeterminate fate did not match his demonstrated worth. In Weber's terms, the "ineradicable demand for a theodicy"<sup>424</sup> (that is the need to explain the discrepancy between destiny and merit)<sup>425</sup> had called forth in the mind of at least one of the them "the ancient conception of a personal God as the lord of Heaven"<sup>426</sup> and representative of the heroes' paradise beyond the earth.<sup>427</sup> The noble hero who continued to perform heroic deeds could be forsaken by his God at any time. However, so long as he continued to perform heroic deeds, his entry into the heroes paradise was assured in his mind. Thus, Weber found that there was implied in the warriors' accepting the

---

424. Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 275.

425. Ibid., p.275.

426. Weber, The Religion of China, p. 193.

427. Writes Weber, "that the worship of chthonic deities such as Mother Earth generally presupposes a relative importance of agriculture is fairly obvious, but such parallelism is not always direct. Nor can it be maintained that the heavenly gods, as representatives of a heroes paradise beyond the earth, have everywhere been noble gods rather than chthonic deities of the peasantry." In this instance, however, Weber was certain that the God of Heaven was a noble god. He had visible evidence which provided a direct observational understanding of how the God of Heaven originally was conceived. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 410.

the image of a personal God of Heaven a naive faith that justice would be done. The warriors who continued to perform heroic deeds had to face the problem of an imperfection and through theodicy a common meaning was found by means of which the unity of the primitive image of the world in which everything was magic was retained in an abstract form. These warriors lived neither by exploiting their great past nor for a future beyond the present.<sup>428</sup> It was in neither the future nor the past that their sense of dignity lay. They lived merely in the present. Their religion provided the kind of status awareness that agreed with their rather tenuous lives.

In this way the noble hero in China differed from the peasant, the feudal landlord, and the individual warrior hero. Weber notes,

the peasant, like Abraham, could die 'satiated with life.' The feudal landlord and the warrior hero could do likewise. For both fulfilled a cycle of their existence beyond which they did not reach. Each in his own way could attain an inner-worldly perfection as a result of the naive ambiguity of the substance of his life.<sup>429</sup>

Unlike them, the noble hero of China, prior to the founding of the empire, did not complete a cycle of existence beyond which he did not reach nor attain that inner worldly perfection.

---

428. For further discussion of the sense of dignity characterizing positively and negatively privileged status groups see "Class, Status, Party" in From Max Weber Essays in Sociology, pp. 189-90.

429. Ibid., p. 356.

Rather, his was the sort of perfection achieved through continuity between this world and the next. In a sense, the cycle of his life had no beginning and no end. Weber concluded that with the recognition of a personal God of Heaven, the clan association ceased to exist for a time. The warrior heroes continued to perform heroic feats with a certain naive enthusiasm, unaware of the need to set limits.

### 3. The Idea of Freedom

A charismatic warlord emerged. Apparently, an extraordinary display of physical strength gained for him a special recognition by the other warlords. It was the recognition of an inner strength which he continued to prove time and time again. This warlord, however, continued to use force in an attempt to expand his power beyond his own community. A perpetual "imperialism" produced an "imperator"<sup>430</sup>: that is, in Weber's own words, "a "charismatic" warlord who might gain an ascendancy"<sup>431</sup> at the expense of others. What caused the warlord to chance realizing his own will?

Although the formulation of any idea requires enthusiasm, Weber knew an inspiration would have been decisive.<sup>432</sup> If the warlord thought of realizing his own will, he would have needed to test his intuition against experience to find out whether or

---

430. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 912.

431. Ibid., p. 912.

432. Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, pp.135-36.

not his idea was sound. Only then did he become aware that he was capable of realizing his own will in a communal activity even against the resistance of others participating in the same activity. Such an intuition, like all intuitions, could not be forced. Although it was prepared on the soil of very hard physical work, the work involved in fighting could not have compelled the idea. Enthusiasm and work and, above all, both of them jointly could have inspired the idea. Ideas, however, as Weber was well aware, "occur to us when they please, not when it pleases us."<sup>433</sup> Scientific inspiration, as Weber observed, "depends upon destinies hidden from us and besides upon 'gifts',"<sup>434</sup> Here then was an idea that depended upon the sort of destiny that is not altogether hidden but that visibly manifests itself. Here was an idea that depended upon certain gifts granted to all human beings, whether or not they recognize and use them: the ability to organize (to separate and to add) and the ability to synthesize. The difference between this warlord and the others may have been that he not only had the idea of exercising his own will but that he also dared to take the risk implied.

Weber knew that

the fates of human beings are not equal. Men differ in their states of health, or wealth, or social status or what not.<sup>435</sup>

---

433. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in Gerth & Mills: From Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 136.

434. Ibid., p. 136.

435. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 953.

He realized that men also differ in unique ways that defy comparison. These unique differences occur by chance.

Thus, "in spite of vast differences" between the ideas and the individuals who serve as their source "ideas", Weber observed,

have essentially the same psychological roots whether they are religious, artistic, ethical, scientific, or whatever else; this also applies about political and social organization. It is a time-bound subjective value-judgment which would like to attribute some of these ideas to "reason" and others to "intuition" (or whatever other distinctions may be used). The imagination of the (contemporary mathematician),<sup>436</sup> for instance, is "intuition" in exactly the same sense as is that of any artist, prophet--or demagogue.<sup>437</sup>

Ideas, no matter what their content, are a product of the human imagination. Yet, the intuition of free will, in order to prove its own reality, must be acted upon. Herein, then, lies the quality of free will which is important to understanding 'political autonomy.' Unlike the development of political autonomy which "must be distinguished from the inner freedom of the private individual," here was an intuition of that element of political autonomy which cannot be distinguished from the inner freedom of the private individual. Weber explains that the concept of power is "sociologically amorphous,"<sup>438</sup> for "all

---

436. The English translation reads Weierstrass.

437. Ibid, p. 1116-17.

438. "Power," Weber states, "is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests." Weber, Economy and Society, p. 53.

conceivable qualities of a person and all conceivable circumstances may put him in a position to impose his will in a given situation."<sup>439</sup> Nonetheless, although the concept of power is sociologically amorphous, it is "psychologically" clear in that there is a distinctively impulsive quality of the experience common to all those who attempt to impose their own will in a given social situation, and that quality is the intuition or instinct of being free of the situation.

If it were obvious to the warlord that the causes of his rise to power were purely accidental, did that make any difference to him? Possibly, the difference was in his awareness of unique circumstances surrounding his rise to power, actual circumstances that might never again be repeated. While such an awareness bears no relation to "knowledge" of tragedy in which "all action, especially political action, is truly interwoven"<sup>440</sup> (for there was no original meaning of the charismatic warlord's activities in relation to which his rise to power could appear to him as paradoxical), it does seem to bear a relation to the sense of having tak<sup>n</sup> advantage of a unique opportunity.

The warlord continued to use force to expand his power beyond his own community, momentarily emancipating himself from the cycle of military life. And in order to continue to feel emancipated, he continued to use force to expand his power beyond

---

439. Ibid., p. 53.

440. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in Gerth & Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 117.

his own community. Thus, the warlord's rise to power was significant in several respects.

Unlike the modern demagogue (who makes use of oratory and who deliberately addresses himself to the intellect of his potential adherents), here was an expression of perhaps the oldest form of demagoguery, use of nothing but the force of violence and sheer brutality. Weber writes,

Ultimately there are only two kinds of deadly sins in the field of politics: lack of objectivity and-- often but not always identical with it--irresponsibility. Vanity, the need personally to stand in the foreground as clearly as possible, strongly tempts the politician to commit one or both of these sins. This is more truly the case as the demagogue is compelled to count upon 'effect.' He therefore is constantly in danger of becoming an actor as well as taking lightly the responsibility for the outcome of his actions and of being concerned with the 'impression' he makes. His lack of objectivity tempts him to strive for the glamorous semblance of power rather than for actual power. His irresponsibility, however, suggests that he enjoys power merely for power's sake without a substantive purpose. Although, or rather just because, power is the unavoidable means, and striving for power is one of the driving forces of all politics, there is no more harmful distortion of political force than the parvenu-braggart with power, and the vain self-reflection in the feeling of power, and in general every worship of power per se. The mere 'power politician' may get strong effects, but actually his work leads nowhere and is senseless.<sup>441</sup>

This warlord, however, had only his actual effect to count upon. He was not in any danger of becoming an actor or of taking

---

441. Ibid., p. 116.

lightly the responsibility for the outcome of his actions. He was not in danger of being concerned merely with the impression he made. In the absence of objectivity, the warlord had no way of distinguishing the glamorous semblance of power from actual power. It was not a matter of his mastering the technique of appearing to let facts speak for themselves, but of the fact of a situation of violence breeding violence that was out of his control.

Genuine charisma, as Weber noted, is self-determined. Its bearer has limits as well as a direction which he sets for himself. The warlord's charisma was not absolutely genuine; although it was self determined, it knew no limits. Weber explains that the essence of politics is struggle (the kind of struggle that recruits allies and a voluntary following).<sup>442</sup> Here, however, was the potential for the kind of struggle that would continue to create enemies, the kind of struggle from which there is no exit, no chance of freeing oneself. This kind of struggle does not qualify as "political," for it is a struggle of the kind that is only fought with the heart and not with the head.

Nevertheless, Weber understood that

important for understanding the meaning of "rationalism"- is not inherent in ideas or of "works" or in his inner experience; rather, the difference is in manner in which the ruled and led experience and internalize these ideas ....Rationalization proceeds in such a fashion that the broad masses of the led merely accept

---

442. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 1414.

or adapt themselves to the external, technical resultants which are of practical significance for their interests (as we learn the multiplication table and as too many jurists learn the techniques of law), whereas the substance of the creator's ideas remain irrelevant to them. This is meant when we say that rationalization and rational organization revolutionize "from the outside," whereas charisma, if it has any specific effects at all, manifests its revolutionary power from within, from a central **mentanoia** (change) of the followers' attitudes.<sup>443</sup>

How then did the dominated experience the warlord's demagoguery?

Perhaps it made no difference to them that the causes of the emperor's ascendancy were purely accidental. For these warlords, unlike the emperor, the result of the emperor's effort to realize his own will stood in a paradoxical relation to its original meaning. For how could Heaven, as the source of their extraordinary abilities and worth, have produced so destructive a force with no apparent source outside of himself? The process of anthropomorphization had taken the form of attributing to the God of Heaven "the human quality of a mighty potentate roughly akin to Zeus".<sup>444</sup> In this instance, a power conceived by analogy to man was thought to have been coerced into the service of man. The warlord who possessed the requisite charisma for employing the appropriate means was found to be even stronger than the God whom he compelled to do his will. In effect, the God of Heaven was not the kind of potentate who bestowed his discretionary favor on the

---

<sup>443</sup>. Ibid., pp. 116-17.

<sup>444</sup>. Ibid., p. 422.

basis of "entreaty, gifts, service, tributes, cajolery, or bribes"<sup>445</sup> nor one whose favor could be "earned as a consequence of the devotees' own faithfulness and good conduct in conformity with his will."<sup>446</sup>

Rather it was reasoned that if the God of Heaven (conceived by analogy to a man), was coerced into the service of a man whose powers derive from Heaven, then that man must be his son: the "Son" of Heaven. Weber notes,

Originally imperial power was like a feudal suzerainty over the princes. Thus, sacrificial rites to Heaven became the monopoly of the emperor who was considered the "Son" of Heaven.<sup>447</sup>

Apparently, the emperor's performance of sacrificial rites to Heaven was initially viewed as indicating that a pact had been concluded with the God as a means of deflecting, through magical means, God's wrath. The emperor's rise to power was explained in terms that would suggest the existence of a household, not a household that could serve adequately as a unit of economic maintenance for its members or one that serves as a bedrock for both loyalty ("the loyalty of subordinates towards the holders of authority") and "authority" (derived "from practical knowledge and experience").<sup>448</sup> Rather, the terms were meant to indicate the presence of a kind of authority deriving from superior strength

---

<sup>445</sup>. Ibid., p. 422.

<sup>446</sup>. Ibid., p. 472.

<sup>447</sup>. Weber, The Religion of China, p.22.

<sup>448</sup>. Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 356-60.

(the stronger able bodied son as against the father of lesser ability) and, thereby, signifying a kind of active image of anti-authoritarianism within the household.

As Son of Heaven, the emperor, having compelled the God of Heaven to do his will, demonstrated that he was even stronger than his presumed father. The mere fact that the princes recognized the emperor's inner strength and will to freedom momentarily established his extraordinary power to which they then immediately surrendered out of distress. The princes also knew that the emperor's mission was power that, in continuing to prove itself, would destroy the potential for their continued well-being. This immediately became the basis for at least one of them calling the warlord Son of Heaven and for the others to agree with the designation. Knowing tragedy as they did, the warriors attitude of complete irreverence toward the God of Heaven was irrevocably altered as expressed in the thought of the emperor as his son. For the princes adopted an inner pragmatic, matter-of-act attitude toward imperial power which became the basis for calling the warlord Son of Heaven. Their reasoning did not leave the emperor's continued ascendancy to chance for it was not a matter of chance that the emperor lost interest in realizing his own will through violent methods. Rather, the reasoning worked in such a way that the emperor merely adjusted himself to the external ritualist forms of expressing his extraordinary status group difference which was of practical significance for his new-found interest in the operation of a

cult: the cult of Heaven. The princes and the heads of households thereby were left free to pursue their own interests, that is the interests of the kin group. In effect, not only did the warlords wish to avoid the situation of anarchy, but they also seemed to understand the emperor's need for some degree of certainty of the continuity of his position. The image of the emperor that had been created by the idea of a Son of Heaven like a switchman determined the tracks along which his actions were pushed by the dynamics of interest. The emperor may have yielded the chance to realize his own will in a communal activity that involved the other warlords. What he gained was some degree of certainty of the durability of an extraordinary status group difference. The emperor's need of such a guarantee was no greater than his need for actual power, but, as it seems, he could not distinguish between them.

Weber found that the perception of human dignity (like the "dignity" of a "people") emerges with a kind of tragic relationship.<sup>449</sup> Unlike the dignity of a people, it seems that human dignity emerges with the perception of a tragic relationship both to one's past and to one's future and, therefore, with a sense of personal history in terms of which the present is regarded as significant. In this instance, the emperor was without dignity when he accepted the designation Son of Heaven. The emperor lacked a fixed social classification; his

---

449. Weber, "Class, Status, Party," in Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, pp. 188- 91.

uncommon fate was not only that of being deprived of a human classification, but also that of voluntarily agreeing to the deprivation.

The emperor's performance of sacrificial rites to Heaven served as "a magical instrumentality that in part stood at the immediate service of the coercion of Heaven."<sup>450</sup> Similarly, the princes made sacrifices to the spirits of the land in order to coerce the spirits that express themselves in the land and thereby to promote the material well-being that would sustain a following. They also made sacrifices to the ancestors in order to re-establish the association of the kin group on the ground of the charisma of their ancestors. And the heads of households made sacrifices to the ancestral spirits of their kinship group as a way of protecting their respective households from the encroachment of neighboring households.

The unity in the realm of magic and in the purely magical image of the world remained unbroken. In the case of Chinese thought, it was no longer the unity of a primitive image of the world in which everything was concrete magic. Nonetheless, it still was the unity of a world accessible only to magical influences.

#### 4. The Social Contract

At this point, the idea of a social contract as the basis for the separation of magical powers was anticipated in a

---

<sup>450</sup>. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 422-23.

primitive fashion.<sup>451</sup> It was not the form of pact between the ruler and the ruled under which the subjection of the ruled is conceived as the source of the ruler's right. Nor was it "the essentially different form of a contract between the ruler and those whose authority derives from him."<sup>452</sup>

Unlike all those primitive contracts by which political or other personal associations, permanent or temporary, or family relations are created, the contract did not involve "a change in what may be called the total legal situation or universal position of the persons involved."<sup>453</sup> The contract, instead, involved the establishment of a legal like situation among the persons involved. By terms of this contract the "imperator" was somebody's child and the princes were his "royal clientele." It was a primitive "status-like contract" that resembled the kind of purposive agreement peculiar to an exchange or market economy. The contract established a kind of fraternity (or fraternal order with a feudal like separation of magical powers) that granted to the participants (the emperor, the princes, and heads of households) the right to pursue the special interests of their kin group.

Thus, whereas the market and its processes does not acknowledge personal distinctions, functional interests dominate it; here was an example of something like a real market. Whereas

---

451. Ibid., p. 1082.

452. Ibid., p. 1082.

453. Ibid., p. 672.

a real market "knows nothing of (personal)<sup>454</sup> honor;"<sup>455</sup> the market of extraordinary resources knew of a kind of honor that did not recognize personal differences. This market was unlike a real market in that its status order did not mean precisely the reverse of the market.<sup>456</sup> Here the "status-like order" was synonymous with the "market". As to the general effect of the 'status order', according to Weber, "only one consequence can be stated, but it is a very important one: the hindrance of the free development of the market."<sup>457</sup> In this status-like order of a "market" of extraordinary resources, the potential for an all out war of each against all had been blocked.

Weber acknowledged that domination by virtue of a constellation of interests,

is based upon influence derived exclusively from the possession of goods or marketable skills guaranteed in some way and acting upon the conduct of the dominated, who remain...formally free and are motivated simply by the pursuit of their own interests.<sup>458</sup>

In this instance, Weber found that the emperor possessed extraordinary skills which as Son of Heaven were guaranteed to act not upon the dominated. The emperor did not pretend to be

---

454. Note the addition of personal was meant to clarify Weber's meaning at this point and is implicit in his subsequent remarks. See Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 936-38.

455. Ibid., pp. 936-38.

456. Ibid., p. 936.

457. Ibid., p. 937.

458. Ibid., p. 943.

exercising authority. He was simply pursuing his own interests as Son of Heaven and realized them best when the dominated persons, who were acting with a formal likeness of freedom, rationally pursued interests that were forced upon them by objective circumstances. As Weber knew from personal experience,

The Sermon on the Mount says, "resist no evil." In opposition, the state asserts: You shall help right to triumph by the use of force, otherwise you too may be responsible for injustice.<sup>459</sup>

However, both the Sermon on the Mount and the state address themselves to the autonomous person. The image of the God of Heaven and of the Son of Heaven did not. The founding of the empire did not coincide with any sort of importance being attached to the individual person. Possibly, a certain value was attached to human life. For there was implied a primitive agreement or contract and a change of status. The substance of the idea of individual autonomy was lost. The founding of a civilization followed no law; the very success of the social contract which appears to have lasted for eight hundred years without having to be renegotiated and perhaps also the continual unity that still exists in China today has depended on the knowledge and perhaps fear of the tragic consequences of human individuals being left free to their own devices.

---

459. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," p. 335.

## CONCLUSION

Max Weber sought to raise empirical sociology to the level of a science. In the process, he found "an unbroken unity...in the case of Chinese thought." Weber's decision to investigate the existence of the bachelor house in China was based on the thought that he might find that unity and he did, as we have shown, in the course of learning of the achievement of culture in China and of the circumstances of the birth of Chinese civilization. Weber's original idea was well-founded. This we now know from having laid groundwork of Weber's claim to empirical knowledge of the case of Chinese thought. Weber's achievement was to grasp the significance of the religious idea of common ancestry for the achievement of culture and of the secular expression of freedom so feared for the pragmatic attitude and reasoning that was the original hallmark of Chinese civilization. We have come to Weber's understanding of the unbroken unity that this development represents.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bensman, Joseph. "Hans Gerth's Contribution to American Sociology." Politics, Character, and Culture: Perspectives from Hans Gerth. Edited by Joseph Bensman, Arthur Vidich, and Nobuko Gerth, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982.
- Blau, Peter. On the Nature of Organizations. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974,
- Chang, Kwang-Chi. Shang Civilization. Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Coser, Lewis. Masters of Sociological Thought. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977.
- Dawe, Alan. "Theories of Social Action." in A History of Sociological Analysis. Edited by Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Giddens, Anthony. Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1982.
- Goldstein, Jean. "The Quest for Sastsuma Ware." Arts of Asia. 1991, pp. 86-94.
- Goldstein, Robyn. An Outline of Max Weber's Sociology of Science. Unpublished.
- Gouldner, Alvin. The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology. New York: Basics Books, 1970.
- Granet, Marcel. La Pensee Chinoise. Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1934.
- Kasler, Dirk. Max Weber. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Levy, Jr., Marion J. book review of The Religion of China. Far Eastern Quarterly. Volume xi, Number 3 May, 1952, pp. 386-89.
- Murvar, Vatro. Max Weber Today. Wisconsin: Max Weber Colloquia and Symposia, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1983.
- Merton, Robert King. Social Theory and Social Structure. New York: The Free Press, 1968.
- "Civilization and Culture," Sociology and Social Research. Volume 21, November-December, 1936, pp. 103-113.

- Nisbet, Robert A. The Sociological Tradition. (New York: Basic Books, 1966.
- Parsons, Talcott. The Structure of Social Action. New York: Free Press, 1937.
- Robertson, Ian. Sociology. New York: Worth Publishers. 1987.
- Salomon, Albert. "Max Weber's Methodology." Social Research. Volume 1, May, 1934.
- . "Max Weber's Political Ideas." Social Research. Volume #2, number 3, August, 1935.
- Sprengel, Otto van der. "Max Weber on China." History and Theory Studies in Philosophy of History. Mouton and Co., 1966. Symposium on theory and history held June 1961, Harvard University, under the sponsorship of the Henry P. Hendall Foundation.
- Weber, Max. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Edited by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- . The Methodology of the Social Sciences. Translated and edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. New York: The Free Press, 1949.
- . Ancient Judaism. Translated and edited by Hans Gerth and Don Martindale. New York: Free Press, 1952.
- . The Religion of China. Translated and edited by Hans Gerth with an "Introduction" by C.K. Yang. New York: The Free Press.
- . The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism. Translated by Talcott Parsons. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1958.
- . The Religion of India. Translated and edited by Hans Gerth and Don Martindale. New York: The Free Press, 1958.
- . General Economic History. Translated by Frank H. Knight. New York: Collier Books, 1961.
- . Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie. JCB Mohr 1972, Paul Siebeck, Tübingen.
- . Economy and Society. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. California: University of California Press, 1978.

- . Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics. Translated by Guy Oakes. New York: The Free Press, 1975.
- . Critique of Stammler. Translated by Guy Oakes. New York; The Free Press, 1977.
- Wittfogel, Karl. Oriental Despotism, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957.