中国文化概论

主摇编摇周摇仪

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Preface

At the beginning of the 灵悦园, when the first group of American students came to study at Guangxi University, I was assigned to teach them Chinese culture. They were very much interested in this course. Having learned something about Confucianism and Taoism, they had a discussion with our students in the English Department. I was shocked to find how little our students know about our own ancestors. They were so ignorant of our history and our national heritage that some of them had no idea which historical period Confucius lived in or what his famous sayings were, and many of them dared not utter a word throughout the discussion.

This reminded me of what Chairman Mao said in his article *Reform Our Study*:

Many party members are still in a fog about Chinese history, whether of the last hundred years or of ancient times. There are many Marxist-Leninist scholars who cannot open their mouths without citing ancient Greece; but as for their own ancester—sorry, they have been forgotten.

It occurred to me that it might benefit our students (both Chinese and American) if they had a textbook on Chinese culture written in English. I talked it over with Prof. Liang Yihua, who was then Director for International Relations of Guangxi University. He shared my idea. With our collaborative effort, *Chinese Culture* came out in 灵悦源 The book, however, limited in space, deals only with Chinese cultural traditions—Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

We have been longing to rewrite it, and expand it so that our students will be provided with more, extensive information covering every aspect of Chinese culture.

Thanks to the editors of Chongqing University Press who are organizing scholars from the universities in Northwest, Southwest and Central China to compile a series of textbooks for the English majors, including *An Introduction to Chinese Culture*, which I volunteered to undertake.

This book is based upon my previous books on Chinese culture and my experience in teaching this course for the past ten years. After six months of intense work, I now have a pile of finished manuscripts on my desk and some breathing space.

My acknowledgements should go to those authors whose works I have consulted. I especially would like to thank my dear friend and colleague Professor Liang Yihua and American teacher Pattricia Ann Cobb and British teacher Cheritan Hunt, who helped to read the manuscripts chapter by chapter and gave me many suggestions.

Zhou Yi
Guangxi University
March, 圆圆蒙

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Contents

Chapter One Chinese History

Ⅰ A Chronological Table of Chinese History …… 3
Ⅱ A Summary of Chinese History …… 4
Ⅲ Historical Classics …… 23

Chapter Two Philosophy and Religion

Ⅰ Confucianism …… 35
Ⅱ Taoism …… 51
Ⅲ Buddhism …… 65
Ⅳ Moism and Legalism …… 68
Ⅴ *Yi Jing* (Book of Changes) …… 76

Chapter Three Literature and Art

Ⅰ A Summary of Chinese Literature …… 103
Ⅱ Six Arts and Four Treasures of the Studio in Ancient China …… 129
Ⅲ Calligraphy and Painting …… 131
Ⅳ Acrobatic Art, Martial Arts, Taiji Quan and Qigong …… 139
Ⅴ Beijing Opera and Other Local Operas …… 152

Chapter Four Science and Technology

Ⅰ Four Great Inventions …… 163
Ⅱ Scientific and Technological Classics …… 168

Chapter Five Education

Ⅰ Ancient Private School ····· 179
Ⅱ Present Educational System ····· 181

Chapter Six Manners and Customs

Ⅰ China's Tea Culture ····· 189
Ⅱ China's Wine Culture ····· 196
Ⅲ China's Culture of Food and Drink ····· 204
Ⅳ Traditional Festivals ····· 207

Chapter Seven Tourism and Culture

Ⅰ Culture in Tourism ····· 220
Ⅱ Tourist Resorts and Attractions ····· 222
Ⅲ Tourist Products and Souvenirs ····· 231

Bibliography ····· 241

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Zhou Yi
Guangxi University
March, 2003

Chapter One

Chinese History



- A Chronological Table of Chinese History
- A Summary of Chinese History
- Historical Classics

I

A Chronological Table of Chinese History

(中国历史编年表)

Dynasty (朝代)	Era (纪元)
Emperor Huang (黄帝) and Emperor Yan (炎帝)	3000—2100 B. C.
Yao (尧)	
Shun (舜)	
Yu (禹)	
Xia Dynasty (夏)	2100—1600 B. C.
Shang Dynasty (商)	1600—1100 B. C.
Zhou Dynasty (周)	Western Zhou Dynasty (西周) 1100—771 B. C.
	Eastern Zhou Dynasty (东周) 770—221 B. C.
	Spring and Autumn Period (春秋) 770—476 B. C.
	Warring States (战国) 476—221 B. C.
Qin Dynasty (秦)	221—206 B. C.
Han Dynasty (汉)	Western Han (西汉) 206 B. C. —24 A. D.
	Eastern Han (东汉) 25—220
Three Kingdoms (三国)	Wei (魏) 220—265
	Shu Han (蜀汉) 221—263
	Wu (吴) 222—280
Western Jin Dynasty (西晋)	265—316
Eastern Jin Dynasty (东晋)	317—420
Southern Dynasty (南朝)	Song (宋) 420—479
	Qi (齐)479—502
	Liang (梁)502—557
	Chen (陈)557—589
Northern Dynasty (北朝)	Northern Wei (北魏) 386—534
	Eastern Wei (东魏) 534—550
	Northern Qi (北齐) 550—577
	Western Wei (西魏) 535—556
	Nothern Zhou (北周) 557—581

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Sui Dynasty (**隋**)	581—618
Tang Dynasty (**唐**)	618—907
Five Dynasties (**五代**)	Later Liang (**后梁**) 907—923
	Later Tang (**后唐**) 923—936
	Later Jin (**后晋**) 936—946
	Later Han (**后汉**) 947—950
	Later Zhou (**后周**) 951—960
Song Dynasty (**宋**)	Northern Song Dynasty (**北宋**) 960—1127
	Southern Song Dynasty (**南宋**) 1127—1279
Liao Dynasty (**辽**)	916—1125
Jin Dynasty (**金**)	1115—1234
Yuan Dynasty (**元**)	1271—1368
Ming Dynasty (**明**)	1368—1644
Qing Dynasty (**清**)	1644—1911
Republic of China (**中华民国**)	1912—1949
People's Republic of China (**中华人民共和国**)	1949—

Ⅱ

A Summary of Chinese History

China is a large country with a long history. It has a territory about the size of Europe and a population about a quarter of that of the world. In this vast country of ours there are large areas of fertile land which provide us with food and clothing; mountain ranges which are covered with forests and abound in mineral deposits; rivers and lakes which furnish us with water transport and irrigation; a long coastline which facilitates communication with nations beyond the seas. From

ancient times our forefathers have laboured, lived and multiplied on this vast territory.

China is one of the four homes of the world's earliest civilizations. It has a recorded history of nearly 4,000 years. Throughout the history of Chinese civilization its agriculture and handicrafts have been renowned for their high level of sophistication. During these 4,000 years China has nurtured many great thinkers, scientists, inventors, statesmen, strategists, men of letters and artists, yielding a rich cultural heritage and fine cultural traditions.

The ancient civilization of China has exercised great influence on the modern world. Ezra Pound's translation of Confucian philosophy aroused great interest from the Western world in Eastern philosophy, and his translation of many ancient Chinese poems interested men of letters in the West. The personal dinner place settings used by the first three American presidents, George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, were of Chinese origin, a vivid evidence of China's artistic attraction for the American founding fathers.

The Chinese history can be divided into two periods: the ancient period (ancient times—1840) and the modern period (1840—present).

The Ancient Period

Chinese history began with two legendary figures—Emperor Huang (**黄帝**) and Emperor Yan (**炎帝**), who, together with their tribes, inhabited in the area of Huanghe River (Yellow River) basin in the years around 3000 B.C. By the time of Xia Dynasty (**夏朝** 2100—1600 B.C.) after centuries of living side by side, these two tribes gradually melted into

one. That's why the Chinese people usually call themselves"the descendants of Yan and Huang"(**炎黄子孙**). People at that time believed that the land they lived on was the center of the world, and called their state the"Middle Kingdom"(**中国**), thus giving China its country name.

Although there are no reliable historical data to test the existence of this period, yet legends are abundant, and modern archaeology has found authentic materials—pottery vessels and stone tools and weapons as offerings to accompany the dead in the unearthed ancient tombs, which provide evidence of the life of our ancestors before the Xia Dynasty.

There are many of legends describing the life of the people in this period, especially of the three sage Kings after Emperor Huang and Emperor Yan—Yao (**尧**), Shun (**舜**)and Yu (**禹**). Let's quote some here for you to enjoy.

How Yao and Shun Passed the Throne to the Worthy and the Capable (尧、舜禅让)

According to the *Book of History* (《**尚书**》, a book of ancient times, recording the history from the time of Yao, Shun, Yu down to the early Zhou Dynasty), when Yao was very old, he summoned the chiefs of the Four Mountains and said,"I have been on the throne for seventy years. Who can carry out the mandate of Heaven in place of me**?**' The chiefs of the Four Mountains all said,"We have no such virtues. We would only disgrace the throne. Your son is the right person to ascend the throne." Yao said, "I know him, he is mean and stupid." And Yao asked his officials to recommend someone else. Then the King was told that there was a poor young man named Shun. He was the son of a blind man. His father was

wicked, his mother deceitful and his brother arrogant, yet he was filial to them and lived with them in harmony. The King said, "That is the right person to be the new king. I will try him. I will wive him with my two daughters, and observe his behavior." So his two daughters, Owang (**娥皇**) and Nuying (**女瑛**), came to the bend of the Gui River to be the wives of Shun. Years later Shun ascended the throne.

As the legend has it, when Shun inspected the southern states, he became very ill and died in Xiang (**湘**, at present Hunan Province). His two wives followed his footsteps to Xiang and cried to death. Their tears dented the bamboo, which is the bamboo we have now in Hunan Province, called "tear bamboo" (**斑竹**).

How Yu, the Great, Conquered the Flood (大禹治水)

Some time around 2200 B.C., a great flood covered the earth. Shun sent Gun (**鲧**), Yu's father to control the flood. Gun led people to build dams to block the flood but failed. So Shun gave order to kill Gun. When Yu grew up, he undertook his father's unfinished task. This time he drew from the lessons of his father. He did not build dams, but led people to dig ditches to lead the water away. He worked ceaselessly for thirteen years and succeeded in bringing the flood under control. As the legend has it, so busy was he that "thrice he had gone past his own house without even looking in." As a reward for his achievement, Shun passed the throne to Yu. When Yu died, his son Qi (**启**) seized power and founded Xia, the first dynasty in China, thus beginning the hereditary system in Chinese history.

The Xia Dynasty (夏朝, 2100—1600 B.C.)

The ethnic group of the Xia Dynasty is the Hua Xia nationality (**华夏族**). That's why the Chinese people are also called the Hua People (**华人**) in other parts of the world.

At the beginning of the Xia Dynasty the Youhu tribe (**有扈氏部落**) in the west border rose in rebellion. King Qi led his army and defeated the enemy in Gan (**甘**), at present in Henan Province. This is the first battle recorded in Chinese History.

Farming and stockbreeding were already well developed in the Xia Dynasty. People were familiar with the phenomena of the changes of seasons and arranged their farm work and other activities accordingly.

The last king of Xia, Jie, (**桀**) is notorious in Chinese history for his debauchery. He built "ponds of wine and forests of meat" (**酒池肉林**) to entertain himself and his concubines, resulting in the fall of the state.

One thing worth mentioning is that the second King of Xia, Shaokang (**少康**), used sorghum to brew wine in about 1800 B.C., thus beginning the Chinese culture of wine.

The Shang Dynasty (商朝, 1600—1100 B.C.)

The Shang Dynasty is renowned for its high development of bronze techniques which brought about the separation of Chinese society into town and country dwellers. The nobility and their craftsmen lived in towns, supported by the peasants living in the countryside.

Regular religious rites were popular among the Shang nobles. In addition to a supreme god, they worshipped the spirits of their ancestors. The ceremonies involved the sacrifice

of hundreds of animals, domestic as well as those obtained from the hunt. Their tombs were filled with hundreds of objects made of gold, jade, bronze and stone, for their use in the after life, and in many cases, their slaves were buried with them as well.

Our knowledge of the Shang period comes not only from the excavations of ancient tombs, but also from the inscriptions on oracle bones and tortoise shells. In the time of the Shang, a favorite method of divination was to scrape a thin spot on a tortoise shell, put it over a flame, and have diviners interpret the cracks that appeared on the shell. This was the beginning of the Chinese written language.

The dissoluteness and extravagance of the Shang rulers led to the revolt of the people, and the establishment of the Zhou dynasty.

The Zhou Dynasty (周朝, 1100—221 B.C.)

The Zhou Dynasty lasted for over 800 years, including Western Zhou, Eastern Zhou, Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods.

The Zhou Dynasty is a significant period in Chinese history for it saw the evolution of the Chinese society from a slave system to a feudal one. It also witnessed the flourishing of Chinese culture.

It is interesting to note how the Shang dynasty came to its end. King Zhou (**纣王**), the last Shang emperor, was a debauched tyrant. He used to dine with three thousand people in a forest whose leaves were made of meat and they drank like cows from a pond of wine. Meanwhile, the state of Zhou had gained influence among the vassal states because of its wise

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