AP01: FROM YAO TO MAO (OR SHENNONG TO DENG): A PRÉCIS OF THE COURSE(3/89, 11/89, 12/90; 12/94, 9/96)

A. Library Research

1a. What are your reading and writing responsibilities in this course, and how can you find appropriate things to read?

1. This Course

Normally I first offer a course with live lectures which I tape as I deliver them. Sometimes I wait to tape the lectures until the second time I give the course. I then transcribe the tapes onto my trusty wordprocessor, and gradually revise the transcriptions each time I do the course, cleaning up the logic, and adding more narrative. Eventually, I can begin to give the course as a tutorial during quarters that I am not giving it "live." During tutorial quarters I do not lecture live, nor do we have normal class meetings. Students buy and read the text instead of attending lectures and work their way through it, coming to see me during my office hours. Otherwise they work on their own. At least every other year I give a live version of the course, and update the text.

Some of the resulting chapters can form part of the textbook for another upper division course. For example, chapters AP01 through AP22, originally part of the History 370 tutorial, also serve as part of the text (along with chapters AE01 through AE12 from the History 371 tutorial) for History 480 (Ancient China).

You will note that there is a question at the beginning of each of the four subsections of this chapter. Your weekly quizzes will be drawn at random from these. The one at the head of this subsection may strike you as odd since it does not directly bear on Chinese political history. Nevertheless, knowing the answer to it is necessary for carrying out one of the main course requirements, and students pay much more attention to things they know are going to be on the quiz. There is one chance in a dozen that you will draw that question in the first quiz, and so you may be more diligent than otherwise about finding out what a writing intensive course is like by reading and taking notes from this prefatory section and going to the library and doing the exercises involving reference works that I am going to be describing.

In fact, to encourage you to take notes, appended to this chapter is a small present: a sheet of the kind of note paper I use for quizzes and take notes on myself. You will notice it has a wide left margin. It is called "legal ruled" because lawyers use that wide margin for putting the citations (their footnotes) in. It also leaves them lots of margin for writing in corrections. (Apparently lawyers, like historians, make lots of mistakes.) It is available in the bookstore, though at a higher price than ordinary paper of the same weight and quality. Naturally in this decadent age, they don't sell too much of it compared to that nasty stuff with narrow margins, which doesn't allow you room for corrections and second thoughts, or to pose questions to ask during class or tutorial meetings.

2. Paper Writing

You will write three cumulative papers for History 370 in addition to the weekly quizzes. I call these papers "cumulative" because you will read three books or six articles or some combination of books and articles, with two articles equaling one book. By book I mean monograph—a book on a single subject, running 200-300 pages. That excludes textbooks. A long novel dealing with Chinese politics might count for two monographs worth. For example, *The Scholars* by Wu Ching-tzu, is a 600-page 18th century novel. Coupled with one related article it would count two monographs' worth.

This is no giveaway. *The Scholars* is not only a fine novel, it is also very useful for understanding the meritocratic sector of the Chinese ruling class during the 18th century, and by extension, any meritocracy and the meritocrats who staff it, including contemporary American state university professors.)

All of the monographs and/or articles you read should be on a single subject, though it may perhaps be a fairly large subject. For example, you might want to read on "bureaucrats down through the ages in Chinese history." Suitable readings might include Edward Kracke's book on *Civil Service in Early Sung China* for the 10th and 11th centuries, and Wu Ching-tzu's 18th century novel, along with Chang Chung-li's *The Income of the Chinese Gentry* for the 19th century Chinese meritocracy. These works all focus on what makes Chinese bureaucrats tick and on how they earned their keep over the course of the last few thousand years.

3. Bibliographic Searching

One way to find such books is to look at the bibliographies at the end of each chapter of this text. Each of these bibliographies will comprise two to five or more books and/or articles that are, in my opinion, the first things one ought to read on the particular topic of that chapter. You can also get a kind of verbal bibliography from me directly, subject to the vagaries of my memory and the limitations of my own bibliographic files.

You should, however, also want to learn how to find appropriate reading material when you don't have a Chinese historian under foot. Your first impulse may be to consult the library's computerized catalog. That is perfectly reasonable as a first step, but the catalog cannot deliver all of the bibliographic information you might need, and there are difficulties in using it even within its own limits.

The variety of transliteration systems employed for Chinese authors' names may cause you trouble. In this and similar texts I now employ the *pinyin* system adopted by the Chinese People's Republic in 1952. The AP and New York Times went over to *pinyin* at the end of 1978. From the 17th century until then virtually everyone used one variant or another of the Wade-Giles system. Library catalogs usually use one or the other of the two systems, sometimes with cross-references. I have provided a transliteration table for moving from a *pinyin* syllable to the Wade-Giles spelling which may be used in the catalog.

But once you've grappled with the transliteration problem, you have to decide what words or topics to look up in the card catalog. China? Political History? If you find a book on your topic, how do you tell if it's any good? There is a lot of bad or outdated stuff in the catalog. Worse, a lot of good stuff doesn't make it into the card catalog.

New books may not be in the catalog. The catalogers usually run a year behind the publishers. Still, since this isn't a political science course, being a year behind shouldn't cause too much trouble. I may well know about something new that is important, and we can usually get the library to catalog it in a hurry.

More important is the absence of journal articles from the catalog. Librarians can't afford to hire enough librarians to index and make out author, title and multiple subject cards for all the articles in all the journals a library subscribes to. (The New York Public Library used to do that, but the proliferation of journals and New York City's bankruptcy during the '60s put an end to that practice.)

You will have to find more specialized bibliographies to provide you with such information. A good critical bibliography will supplement my short chapter bibliographies (themselves a species of critical bibliography), and give you some specific items bear-ing "pedigrees" attested by the compiler of the critical bibliography. The "critical" in "critical bibliography" refers to the annotations appended to each citation, and to the arrangement of the items by topic and subtopic and sub-subtopic. Annotations can be very valuable. My bibliographies in this text are arranged by topic in order of their value as the earliest items a student might want to read on that topic. I occasionally append annotations directly to the citations, though more often do so via parenthetical comments in the text of the chapter.

There is a really fine critical bibliography dealing with Chinese history, appropriately enough titled *China: A Critical Bibliography*, by Charles O. Hucker, a distinguished University of Michigan political historian. Unfortunately, it was published in 1962. Even the most reactionary of historians would blush at any longer using this as a definitive source. Too many good books and articles have been published since 1962. In fact, more good stuff has probably been published on East Asian Studies during the generation since 1962 in English than was published during the preceding three generations. Does that mean you can't use Hucker's bibliography? No, but you must almost always supplement it.

Fortunately, Hucker has been updated by the new 3rd edition of *The American Guide to Historical Literature* (1995), though it would be a good idea to consult Hucker too because of the sophistication of his annotations.

One of the several ways to supplement Hucker begins by noticing that it is men who act. The actors in history are not great "forces," abstract entities the names of which you spell (preferably in German) with capital letters: the Volk (the People), the Zeitgeist (Spirit of the Age), etc. Rather it is men with names like Confucius or Wang Anshi who were the makers of Chinese political history. You are bound to run across the names of these people if they are important enough even in the most superficial encyclopedia article on the events with which they were linked.

Get in the habit of jotting down on a separate 3x5 slip any such name you encounter in your preliminary reading on a topic. Then look them up in a modern biographical dictionary. Though we are not quite as well served as yet with biographical dictionaries for Chinese history as we are in English or American history, we are not without suitable materials, at least for the last thousand years.

For America we have *The Dictionary of American Biography* (DAB), which covers the whole of American history, has been updated within the last generation (which is good enough for historians if not political scientists), and at the end of each entry gives you the most important books and articles dealing with the subject of the entry and his career as of the time the article was written. For England we have the DNB (*Dictionary of National Biography*), the granddaddy of and model for all modern biographical dictionaries. Biographical dictionaries like these give you something akin to the entries in a critical bibliography like Hucker's.

For China we do not have one comprehensive work like the DAB or DNB. There are, however, five biographical compendia of comparable scope and quality. Working backwards in historical time, they are *Who's Who in Communist China, Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Dynasty, Dictionary of Ming Biography,* and *Sung Biographies*.

Taken together, these compendia go back from the present nominally to the Song period, beginning 960 AD. Actually, however, since a number of people from the preceding Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (906-960) who were born and did important things during that earlier period lived on into Song times and did important things then too, they also got included in *Sung Biographies*. That pushes its coverage back to the beginning of the 10th century. A few exceptionally long-lived people born back at the end of the Tang (which fell in 906) and lived on into Song are also included.

So for all practical purposes we have biographical dictionaries from a century or two before the beginning of the current millennium on up to the present. That is a lot longer than all of American history and is equivalent to English history since the century before the Norman invasion of 1066.

All of these biographical dictionaries fit the requirements for serving as bibliographic sources: They cite and often annotate their sources at the end of each entry, and are reasonably up to date. The earliest of them was published in 1944 (*Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Dynasty*). *Dictionary of Ming Biography* came out in 1975, *Song Biographies* in 1977, *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* also appeared in the late '70s, and the *Who's Who in Communist China* is regularly updated to appease the political science majors who are its major consumers, along with historians.

The multi-volume *Cambridge History of China*, while sometimes a bit stodgy in the scholarship of its component articles, provides excellent bibliographies for the topics of each of those articles. Unfortunately, not all the volumes of this encyclopedic history have as yet been published, and not all possible topics are covered even within the scope of the published volumes.

Some general encyclopedias also append bibliographies to their entries. That is one distinction between "supermarket" encyclopedias and the fancier kind. For example, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (now partly available on line) has bibliographies at the end of its "macropedia" section articles. These are updated fairly often. My favorite encyclopedia, a new edition of which came out in 1993, is the one-volume (but enormous) *Columbia Encyclopedia*. At $75. it is the best choice as an inexpensive home encyclopedia (unless you have a computer and spend $150 for the *Brittannica* CD-ROM) because it too appends short bibliographies to most articles.

No matter how diligently it is updated, any encyclopedia's or biographical dictionary's bibliographical apparatus is bound to age quickly, so you are soon in the same sort of situation with them as you are with Hucker: You have critically evaluated lists of books and articles, but you can't be sure they are fully up to date.

There is a way out of this dilemma, and it doesn't require you to be lucky enough to dig up a freshly published bibliography. A new type of reference work appeared a generation ago called the "citation index" and this has proved an elegant tool for doing library research.

Three of these citation indexes exist. The granddaddy of them is the *Science Citation Index*, housed in the Science Reference Section of Wilson Library. That started publication in the early 1960s. A decade later came the *Social Science Citation Index*. Nearly a decade after that came the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*.

In computer jargon these are all "data bases." Libraries buy them in printed and bound form quarterly, annually and in five-year cumulations, but if you have a PC and a modem, and a rich uncle or aunt or sugar daddy to pay your telephone bill and search charges, you can access these (and other) data bases through CompuServe or The Source or via the Web and get the information on them as it is updated daily.

A data base is composed of "records." Each record is the equivalent of a note card. Each record is composed of "fields." A field is like the lines on a note card.

Each record on the citation index data base incorporates information from a single article published in one of the several thousand journals which that data base indexes. The first set of fields comprise the article's author's name, the title of the article, the journal in which it appeared and the issue number and date and page numbers.

Then comes the key innovation of this type of data base. The last set of fields on each record are all the footnotes in the article.

These are significant for bibliographic purposes since a writer normally cites in his footnotes all of the most important works published earlier that pertain to that subject.

If this new article deals, for example, with Confucius, its author is bound to cite H.G. Creel's *Confucius: The Man and the Myth* in one of his early footnotes. If you plan to write on Confucius, you have probably already found Creel's book cited in Hucker, because it was published in 1949, well before Hucker's own publication date of 1962. Hucker placed Creel's *Confucius* well toward the top of his list of books and articles on Confucius. That's why you copied the citation out of Hucker. You may even have found it in the catalog under the category “Confucius.”

You then went to the *Social Science Citation Index* and to the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* and you looked up “Creel, H.G.” in the citation index portion of those works. That may have given you a reference to a *Journal of Asian Studies* article on Confucius published in 1988—recent enough even for a political science major—which cited Creel's book in one of its footnotes.

So the existence of the *Social Science Citation Index* rendered of continuing use all of the arduous work that Hucker did back in the late 1950s and early '60s, long before PCs and data bases. Hucker had to use 3x5 cards and a typewriter, which is why his bibliography has taken so long to update.[1]

Fortunately, you needn't wait for an updated version of his text. You can update Hucker yourself for any particular topic that interests you by using this already available data base, the citation index.[2]

Because it was designed long ago in computer years by a reference librarian for other reference librarians, the citation index is not particularly user-friendly, though it isn't as unfriendly as D-Base, which you have to take a course to learn how to run. You may have to get a reference librarian to yammer at you about the SSCI for fifteen minutes or so with his finger pointing to relevant parts of the text, and he may want to look over your shoulder while you try it yourself for the first time.

4. Topics For Papers

What you write about is up to you and is limited only by the range of your interests. The only restriction for History 370 is that your topic should be on Chinese political history, or those aspects of Chinese social history that pertain to the nature of the Chinese ruling classes.

Your topic can deal with any period or periods from the first appearance of the first hint of a state in Chinese history. You can go all the way back to Huang Di in the 27th century BC, or Yao late in the 3rd millennium BC, or maybe to when Yu's son founded the Xia dynasty a couple of generations later, and you can proceed right on down to the “First Red Emperor,” Mao Zedong. So you can range from Yao to Mao, just as the course's title states.

The politics of your topic can be either domestic or involve foreign policy. A social history topic should limit itself to the acts of the ruling classes, particularly its aristocratic and meritocratic components, and the political side of the plutocratic component rather than the ways the rich earned their livings before they became plutocrats. You can write on the latter aspect of plutocracy for History 371.

You should come up with an explicitly defined topic and an annotated bibliography of works on it by the end of the second week of the course. First brood over a topic. Then decide on a period or periods, and the actors you are most interested in. Finally, match your topic with appropriate citations, annotating each with a sentence or two to indicate what sorts of material you expect to get from it.

How might you find out enough about a book or article to compose such an annotation without going through the formality of actually reading it? You might try to find an abstract of it, as for example at the beginning of the journal issue in which an article appears, or in a journal of abstracts or in a book review. Fortunately, the citation indexes also cite book reviews. So you needn't just look for reviews during the several years after publication in sources like *Book Review Index* or *Book Review Digest*, which are old-fashioned, non- data-base ways to get abstracts of a book. Many older books didn't get into these two sources because until recently they didn't include reviews from many scholarly journals. They mostly abstracted reviews from popular and semi-popular periodicals.

Unfortunately, the citation indexes haven't been extended very far back. The *Social Science Citation Index* only goes back to the 1960s. For books published earlier than that you'll have to fall back on *Book Review Digest* and *Book Review Index*, and hope for the best. Or, you can hope that Charles Hucker or some other critical bibliographer annotated the item of interest to you. *Historical Abstracts'* coverage of East Asia is somewhat spotty, but it is worth checking, especially for modern history. The new *AHA Guide* has an excellent section on Asian historical literature and pretty decent annotations for most items.

Choice magazine, a journal which reviews new books for college libraries, every twenty years or so puts out a compendium, *Books For College Libraries*, based upon books it has reviewed. It doesn't contain annotations, but for each item gives a reference to the particular issue of *Choice* magazine that contains a short (175-190 word) review of the book. The new edition came out in 1988, and a copy is in the back-room section of Wilson Library. I have page proofs of the Asia section (which I helped write) which you may consult.

You may also find some comments about particular works in the short biographical dictionary articles which cited them.

After you compile and annotate your bibliography, you should read and then write a précis of the first book or pair of articles. A précis is a summary of the argument of a book which preserves the order of the argument of the parts of the original, but does so in your own words. When you've read the second book, you will add a précis of it to the précis of the first, and then compare the first and second books with each other. After you've read the third, you'll compare the third with the first two.

This comparison section will cumulate. Each précis will only change in response to my comments and corrections to the particular draft when you first deal with it and your own increasing knowledge of the topic. What will change most with each successive draft are the comparisons of each work with its predecessors. That section will grow and change during each of the three drafts of your paper.

By the time the paper is finished at the end of the term you will have three précis, each headed by a full citation of the work being précised. Then will come a long comparative section. If you are doing three-page précis, you will end up with nine pages in that section. If you add one page of comparisons each time, you will wind up with four pages total, each page somewhat different from its incarnation in the previous draft.

The most important writing you do in writing a paper, even for a non-writing intensive course is rewriting. Unless you are Dickens or Dostoevsky (notorious as publishers of their first drafts), you will likely have to write much as Hemingway or Faulkner did. You will have to rewrite several times. Most people, if they write well, write by rewriting.

I suggest you gain access to a computer either by buying one, or by using one on campus, and have one of the computer lab consultants teach you how to use the very simple wordprocessor, “College Writer,” developed at WWU. Putting your earlier rough drafts onto disk will facilitate the rewriting process. This is the age of the wordprocessor. Aside from the convenience of using one for this course, you really ought not to get out of college without learning how to use one.

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[1] A fellow I know spent most of a decade trying to update Hucker with a PC and a database program. Unfortunately, when you use such devices you can do so much more that you do do so much more and so it takes you forever to complete the task.

[2] The fellow who invented the citation index back in the '60s was himself a reference librarian. He is now a very rich reference librarian, and deservedly so.

Short of putting you through the whole course first, the best way for me to stimulate you into picking a topic of interest to you is to give you a brief “Reader's Digest” run-through of Chinese political history. The next two sections of this chapter will attempt to do that. You should “take your pulse” as you read along. If you find it beating faster as I hit a particular topic or personality, you might take that as a sign or portent that you ought to read more on that topic.

B. Early Civilization

1b. What are the traits of early civilization? When and under what circumstances did it appear in China? When and under what circumstances did it break down and begin to transform itself into high civilization?

1. Local, Territorial and Universal States

It is no accident that this course goes from Yao to Mao. There really is a connection between the two. Significant aspects of the politics of China under the mythical Yao actually survive in Mao. It is, therefore, appropriate to talk contemporary politics when dealing with ancient, medieval and early modern Chinese politics, and ancient politics when dealing with contemporary issues. Chairman Mao really did think of himself as comparable to the First Emperor of Qin (3rd century BC). Since the 1960s China really has been going through a “crisis of the first succession” strikingly like that endured by early Han Dynasty China from 196 to 178 BC.

I divide Chinese history into three stages: early civilization, first stage of high civilization and second stage of high civilization, the last part of which we and the poor Chinese are currently enduring. Whether in China or elsewhere, each of these stages has political traits peculiar to itself. Each has by a kind of inner logic tended to break down, enter into crisis and to transform itself into the next stage.

Early civilization began to appear in China soon after 3000 BC. As compared with pre- civilization, the main new institution was the state, and the presence of what one could call “relations of state” between some people and others, or in plain English, the appearance of a ruling class which we can distinguish from the much larger class of those who were ruled. Accompanying the state was a form of transfer of resources which is peculiar to the state, which one could call “political redistribution,” under which the ruled transfer material resources to the rulers in exchange for certain non-material services.

The state is a form of human community. It is different, however, in a number of ways, from pre-state communities. Its members are not related to each other. They may not necessarily even be physically contiguous to each other. They have, however, entered into “relations of state” with each other. Early states may still look very much like ordinary small pre-state communities. These are local states. If you go to the top of a tall hill in the middle of one of them, you can see all the way to the state’s borders in all directions before the horizon cuts off your vision.

A territorial state is sufficiently larger so that even from a fairly high hill in its middle, the borders of the state are over the horizon. To see its borders, you might have to climb a world-class mountain on a clear day.

A universal state is bigger yet. Its borders are coextensive with the reach of all of the cultural traits that one associates with a large bunch of people who might otherwise be divided up among two or more territorial states. A universal state is, therefore, a whopping big territorial state. You would probably need to ascend by rocket to a geostationary orbit to see all of its territory simultaneously. If you go outside of its borders, you will find people who talk and act funny in terms of the norms for talking and acting characteristic of those who live within the universal state's borders.

An early civilization has only local states. Stable territorial and universal states do not appear until high civilization.

2. Ruling Classes

The key difference between state and pre-state communities is the presence in the former of a “ruling class.” At first it is hard to tell the difference between the “big man” of a pre- state community and the “chieftain” of a small and simple early state. The latter, however, is at least on the way to becoming a political ruler because he enters into relations of state with those over whom he rules. He does this by asserting the presence of a realm of “Heaven” separate from a realm of “Earth,” claims some sort of privileged connection with Heaven, and on the basis of that connection claims a unique status as a special sort of creature—as “Man” in the full sense.

A headman doesn't do any of these things. Neither he nor the others in his community have as yet noticed the existence of Heaven, and so they have not as yet noticed the difference between Earth and Man by contrasting both with Heaven. Even the headman apparently still thinks of himself as merely a creature, and may not even distinguish his kind clearly from any other ape-like creatures who live in the nearby forest.

Among his own people, headman is at best merely first amongst equals. Perhaps he is older than the rest of the members of the horde or hamlet. He may even literally be the father of the Paleolithic era horde which he leads. He may also simply be the dominant male in that group. A dominant male may or may not be the eldest. However, a big man is no more in a relation of state with the fellow members of his group than the senior chimpanzee is in a band of chimps. There are chimp headmen, but not chimp chieftains (at least outside the pages of Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes*).

Because the chieftain enjoys a special relationship to Heaven, even people who are not his relatives will volunteer to be coerced by him. They will enter into a relationship of state with him. He and his family constitute the beginnings of an hereditary aristocracy.

The original definition of an aristocrat is that he is a person linked to or descended from Heaven—i.e. from the transcendent, something which is beyond or outside Earth in some literal or metaphorical sense. During early civilization, this connection with Heaven is still believed to be a fairly literal one. The chieftain may partake of or be a creature of Heaven who has intruded onto Earth, or is sincerely believed to have done so.

3. Political Redistribution

Once he enters into this relation of state with them, people are willing to give the ruler goods without expecting him to periodically redistribute virtually all of them back to the original donors as gifts, as even the richest of headmen must apparently do. The chieftain does redistribute *some* of the goods he is given, but not necessarily equally. His motive is political: to assure the loyalty of potential rivals.

This *political* redistribution differs from economic exchange. Ruler and ruled are not equals. The goods offered up by the ruled are much more nearly like the offerings that people make to the gods. The ruler offers nothing so concrete in return. At the material level there occurs only a loosely linked pair of one-way movements of goods. An inferior ruled person offers “tribute” (to translate the Chinese term *gong* 貢) to his superior ruler. The ruler makes “gifts” to his own relatives and perhaps to big men or elders who still, according to custom, lead their peers in the hamlets into which even local states are divided.

I will have much more to say on the inner logic of this process in the next chapter. For the moment we need merely notice that the first signs of relations of state begin to appear in China early in the third millennium BC, several millennia later than in West Eurasia.

4. The Late Neolithic

Between 3,000 and 2,500 BC there is evidence, both archeological and literary, for the appearance of the state. Things dug out of the ground confirm the accounts in much later myths which purport to deal with these early times. By the time of Yao, which according to the myths was in the middle of the third millennium BC, if not by the time of Huang Di (Yellow Emperor) a few centuries earlier, chieftain-like characters seem to have been engaging in relations of state with ordinary people of the sort outlined above. People offered them tribute; and they made gifts to a few in return. They seemed to be atop what looks like an aristocratic ruling class.

The myths may not be introducing anachronisms here. They ascribe pre-state conditions to the period before Huang Di, and within a few centuries prior to his time sketch in transitional figures such as Fuxi and Shennong whose headman-like traits were beginning to turn chieftainly as well.

The archeological digs give congruent reports. Graves turn up datable to the early third millennium which look fancy enough to be those of ambitious headmen, and a bit later graves seem rich enough and well equipped with enough anti-people weapons to be those of chieftains of local states. None of these graves contain writing, except for some numerals and what may be pictographic representation of names on their pottery, so there is no telling if the archeologists have dug up Huang Di, or just one of his neighbors. If local states were scattered about the middle reaches of the Yellow River valley, we may reasonably postulate that political redistribution was practiced as well within these little statelets.

5. The Bronze Age

According to both the myth cycles and the archeological evidence, the Bronze Age began in the neighborhood of 2000 BC, associated with what the myths call the Xia “Dynasty.” The archeologists, with hints from anthropology, suggest this “dynasty” was actually merely a somewhat more developed local state centering in the neighborhood of modern Loyang, at the fulcrum of China’s central zone.

Several similar neighboring local states soon appear in both the archeological and mythic records. Shang, for example, was to the east of Xia. Several other local states were run by other peoples. Somewhat later the peoples of the center called them the Rong of the west, the Di of the north, the Man of the south, and the Yi of the east.

The mythic record sounds ever less mythic and ever more historical as it enters the second millennium BC. The myths give us lists of rulers of this Xia state, beginning with Yu and his son, who founded the state, and Yu's chief minister, and they tell plausible stories of the struggles for power among these figures.

The myths also tell how Xia was eventually conquered by a collateral relative of its royal family who ran the Shang state to the east. “Successful Tang” was the name of the founder of this conquest state. He is estimated by the later compilers of the myths to have done the deed in 1766 BC. The archeologists' Carbon-14 tests of putatively early Shang objects make it 1500 BC plus or minus 200 years. Myth and science are pretty close.

6. Late Shang & Zhou

Midway through the Shang's tenure, the myths tell us, after King Pan Geng moved the capital from the neighborhood of Loyang and Zhengzhou to the north side of the Yellow River in the neighborhood of modern Anyang, a transition to a new type of civilization got under way. The Shang local state suddenly began to grow larger. Writing in sentences begins to show up on certain objects excavated from the site of the last Shang capital. The names of the same kings mentioned in the later mythic accounts appear in these texts in the same chronological order as in the myths, showing that these myths are true, if not altogether complete. In short, the supposed myths dealing with Shang, at least, seem to be actual historical accounts.

From around 1300 to around 1000 BC, the late Shang culture appears to have entered into the crisis of its early civilization. The state kept getting bigger, but it kept getting into trouble as a consequence of its growth. Its intended subjects at its edges, over the horizon from the rulers, regularly double-crossed the Shang rulers who quite literally couldn't keep their eyes on these over-the-horizon subjects, and there were as yet no political mechanisms to control such people in the absence of the rulers. Apparently the representative of the gods had to be literally present to be obeyed.

Hence this crisis apparently also operated on the religious level, and could only be resolved by beginning at that level. A new religion did in fact appear among a new people creating a local state named Zhou over the horizon to the west of Shang in subzone B1, among the supposed “barbarians” there. These western barbarians were considered aliens by the Shang because they had allegedly mixed their agrarian culture with that of the pastoralists of the north as they wandered along the northern frontier zone.

Perhaps as a consequence of their many moves, the Zhou had come up with a new religion, or at least some new wrinkles on an old religion: the religion of Tian (the same *tian* 天 that now forms the first syllable of *tianqi* 天氣—weather—or *tianran* 天然—naturally). Tian was (and still is) written with a pictograph of a man. So Tian must have been a god before he merely became “nature,” or the “sky,” or at least a very big guy who lived in the sky. According to the literary accounts, he either lived where the North Star is or was himself the North Star. Ruling from his northern celestial palace he was the fixed point around which the other deities—the fixed stars—revolved.

Soon after coming up with this new religion, the Zhou created a structure on earth which was remarkably analogous to the above description of the visible structure of Heaven in the night sky. Indeed, the layout of Chinese administrative cities to this day reflects this order of Heaven: The center of administration always lies at the northern end of the city, with its main gate facing south.

Inspired by this new Heaven, the Zhou conquered the Shang, and did not just replace it with another unstable local state that kept going to pieces as it attempted to expand to territorial size. Instead, their new Heaven allowed them to create a very large territorial state patterned after the order of Heaven they had previously envisioned.

It seems plausible to surmise that they succeeded in creating this state by re-presenting (in the locution favored by the political philosopher Eric Voegelin) the structure of Heaven's realm onto earth. That re-presented structure turned out to be the Zhou feudal empire.

This feudal empire was not a static structure. It went through what might be called a “feudal *process*” during most of the 1st millennium BC: A “feudalization” stage of several hundred years began the process, during which a number of small fiefs (semi-independent local states linked by religion, family ties and self-interest to the Sons of Heaven in the Zhou capital) were sprinkled across the map of North China like stones on a Chinese checkers board.

These fiefs eventually bumped up against alien local states at the periphery, and began lumping together in self defense, thereby inaugurating the stage of defeudalization. Eventually the resulting small territorial-state-sized feudal principalities constituted themselves into bureaucratically ruled monarchies of the stage of centralized feudalisms by c. 500 BC. The subvassals who administered them mutated into China's and the world's first meritocracy.

In the course of this half millennium, the Zhou state solved the problems of early civilization, and in the process of doing so created what one could call the first stage of high civilization in a political pattern which was becoming ever more like that of the China of the next two millennia.

C. The First Stage of High Civilization

1c. What are the characteristics of the first stage of high civilization? When and under what circumstances did it appear in China? When and under what circumstances did it break down and begin to transform itself into the second stage of high civilization?

1. Territorial and Universal States

You can think of high civilization as a species belonging to the same genus—civilization—as does early civilization, but even first stage high civilization seems to have been right from the beginning a truly new species, one which had evolved by succession from early civilization.

At the political level a first stage high civilization tends to develop territorial states, and after no great length of time, universal states. It need not initially go to the territorial state level. It can stay mostly at the local state level while evolving up from early civilization, as the ancient Greeks did, and jump directly to a universal state from the predominantly local state level. (Macedonia, the peripheral state which was the creator of the first Greek universal state was, however, a territorial state.) Or, as the Persians and the Chinese did, its core region can move up to territorial state size on the way to creating a universal state. Having a feudal process can tilt a culture in the direction of evolving larger state forms (as in the Chinese case), but other factors can have roughly the same effect (*vid* Persia).

2. A Tripartite Ruling Class

Having a feudal process also tilts a civilization toward having a different mix of parts within its ruling class. The ruling class of early civilization was relatively simple: It consisted solely of aristocrats: those directly connected with Heaven either personally or through hereditary descent from someone personally connected with Heaven..

As high civilization evolves, one or another or both of two other possible segments of a ruling class appear: meritocracy and plutocracy.

A feudal process gives rise to a meritocracy fairly early on in its aftermath. A feudal process creates vassals and lords. Vassals, originally remain loyal to their lords for religious purposes. In the course of the feudal process, certain vassals serving at their lord’s court can turn into meritocrats. Even while still vassals they have satisfied what one could call a “template of merit” that the lords have established for them. Eventually that becomes the main reason why they are in the ruling class. It is no longer because they are minor aristocrats, but because in each generation they manage to satisfy that template, whatever it may happen to be.

At root, a “template of merit” is merely a further re-presentation onto Earth of the dominant belief about the structure of Heaven. It differs from the earlier re-presentations of Heaven in that the template is controlled by the aristocrats (at least during the first stage of high civilization). Its function is to staff the offices of the more complicated territorial states with people likely to be capable of handling the functions of those offices.

In the absence of a feudal process, or some other factor which encourages the evolution of territorial states, either a meritocracy fails to appear, or it just barely begins to evolve. Instead, plutocrats fill the niche left empty by the non-appearance of meritocrats. Rich men begin to be recruited to staff those positions requiring special talents. A feudal process also produces plutocrats. It is just that they are mixed in with meritocrats. As the Greek roots imply (*plutos*, pertaining to Pluto, the god of the underworld, where the gold comes from), a plutocrat becomes a ruler because of his possession of portable forms of wealth.

Portable wealth may either be plundered from others or produced and then exchanged for other forms of wealth. Plundered wealth was the prerogative of aristocrats. Produced and exchanged wealth in any large quantities must at some point pass through markets, and in fact extensive *internal* markets only first appear during the transition into high civilization. The richest men in these markets may be invited to join the ruling class so as to help the rulers govern the markets, either by taxing them or by quite literally “making money” to mimic the commodity-moneys that the merchants have already created spontaneously in their markets. The state eventually notices the existence of this commodity-money and decides it wants in, if only by taxing the exchanges being made in the markets.

Those who become plutocrats are the ones who know where this taxable money is and also how to make extra money-commodities (or perhaps cheaper to produce simulacra of them) which will be convincing enough to circulate along with already existing money commodities.

That is the payoff to the aristocrats and meritocrats (if any exist yet) for inviting plutocrats to join them in the ruling class. The plutocrats teach them how to snatch some of the money that has already been created and how to make new money that will pass in the marketplace.

3. Political Redistribution and the Market

Even where larger and more complicated states did not appear, one new thing that came in at both ends of Eurasia roughly midway through the 1st millennium BC as the first stage of the first original high civilizations blossomed were markets using state-sponsored money-commodities. Later, more derivative, first stage high civilizations in Korea and Japan managed to blossom without markets appearing, and continued to be run by the simple aristocracies of the preceding era’s indigenous early civilizations. In Greece and China, however, economic exchange early on came to supplement political redistribution. Economic exchange may in part have evolved out of political exchange, but it may also have appeared spontaneously. (For the details on how that may have occurred, cf. History 371.)

The market is of interest to a course on political history because it becomes increasingly important as the source of the state's finances. As the collection of tribute evolves into the collection of taxes, most taxes are drawn from the market. The bigger the market grows, directly and indirectly, the larger tax revenues drawn from it can be, and the larger and more complex the state can become. Since the state is the ruling class(es), what the market's revenues really make possible is a far more expensive and elaborate ruling class.

The aristocracy, with its Heavenly justification, remained on top, not just during the first stage but better than two-thirds of the way through the second stage of high civilization as well. The aristocrats' connection with Heaven became more elaborate and described in ever more sophisticated and abstract terms, but it remained the dominant segment of the ruling class well after plutocrats and/or meritocrats had appeared.

Along with the first stage of high civilization comes political philosophy and political science or political technology. These are necessary to describe the more complex nature of the relationship between aristocracy and the other two components of the ruling class with Heaven as well as the new and equally complex three-way relationship between plutocrat, meritocrat and aristocrat.

In the next chapter we will consider how much of this connection with Heaven was or could have been a pious lie and how much of it was, is and must involve honest discoveries about the nature of Heaven.

4. The Early Iron Age

In China, this first stage of high civilization started in the middle of Zhou times, during Eastern Zhou, the first half of which is called the Spring-Autumn Era (early 8th to early 5th century BC).

The Chinese beginnings of high civilization happen to coincide with the beginning of the Early Iron Age in China. Though the Chinese apparently had iron available to them 500 years earlier at the beginning of Zhou times, not long after its appearance in West Asia, they didn't do much with it then. A good case can be made that they had to go through the political, social and economic consequences of making the shift from early to first stage high civilization before they could acquire the institutional framework within which it paid to use lots of iron. The feudal political process therefore probably had something to do with this timing of the key material change.

5. The Warring States Era

By the second subperiod of Eastern Zhou, the Warring States Era, beginning in the early 5th century BC, high civilization was well under way. The preceding Spring-Autumn period represented the last stages of the transition from early to high civilization. Warring States times represented the first full efflorescence (blossoming) of first stage high civilization.

In political terms, large and elaborately organized post-feudal powers were contending with each other for dominance. Foreign policy became a leading issue starting then. It was no longer just a matter of one civilized local state having minimal interactions with alien neighbors whom it considered mere barbarians, and against whom it could not manage to expand in any very stable fashion. Rather, a bunch of equally highly civilized territorial states—a dozen important powers in the ancient Chinese case—were behaving as we would expect from the history of post-feudal Europe much later: Alone and in shifting alliances with the enemies of their enemies, they were doing hideous things unto others before the others could do nasty things unto them.

Seven of the twelve states soon became major powers. Eventually two superpowers—Qin in the northwest and Chu in the middle and lower Yangzi valley—crystallized out and squared off against each other. All this begins to sound rather modern. That is not surprising. We too belong to a local variety of the same species: high civilization. At most we differ from a first stage high civilization as one regional subspecies does from another of the same species. Another similarity is that our civilization also grew up in the aftermath of a feudal political process.

6. The Qin and Han Universal States

One of the two great powers, Qin, which grew up in the same northwestern border region that had earlier produced the Zhou state, eventually carried all before it and produced a genuine universal state out of the territories of its defeated rivals. It included within its territory everything that could have been imagined to have been Chinese, plus some accessible non-Chinese territory.

Though it set up the basic framework for high civilized Chinese political life ever after, this Qin universal state ruled briefly and unstably, and after a vicious civil war collapsed. Its successor, the similarly organized Han Dynasty ruled quite stably for 400 years until the early 3rd century AD.

The evolution of first stage high civilizations into universal states was a universal phenomenon. It happened in South Asia with the Mauryan Empire a little earlier. It happened several times in the Mediterranean Basin with the Persian and then the Macedonian and then the Roman Empires. Three times in three regions is enough for historians to proclaim a universal law.

Apparently high civilizations are such powerful entities that if by accident you get a universal state or something approaching one in size, nothing else in its neighborhood can resist it. The remaining high civilized territorial states are swallowed up by it, and all of the early civilized and precivilized people on its edges are also just meat for the meat-grinder of this universal state.

Nothing stops it until it gets to the end of its tether. That tether can comprise the limits of its communications technology or it can be a kind of internal mental tether determining what the universal state can imagine to be worth swallowing. There will come a point when it will say that a certain new people are not proper meat for it to consume. It will stop there and will not swallow them. Not only is one man's meat another's poison, but meat far enough away and funny enough looking may be perceived as a poison, even if it is not poisonous in actual fact.

By the first few centuries AD, a set of Earthly arrangements so big and so complicated had been created that the old Heaven the Zhou peoples had discovered around 1000 BC no longer seemed adequate as the source from which they had been re-presented. As a consequence, Earth lost its coherence, and the state on Earth entered into a crisis of civilization and went to pieces. In plain language, Han fell, rather than being pushed over by external threats. Rome and the Mauryan empire also fell under analogous circumstances. All three of them fell because the nature of their dominant religions needed to change. They needed either a new Heaven or to expand the boundaries of the Heaven they already had, perhaps by annexing someone else's Heaven.

D. The Second Stage of High Civilization

1d. What are the characteristics of the second stage of high civilization? When and under what circumstances did it break down and perhaps begin to transform itself into a third stage of high civilization?

1. Buddhism and the Reconstitution of the Universal State

The larger and more complex Heaven that arose during the few centuries of disunity that followed the collapse of the Han universal state in China was a Buddhist Heaven which refurbished the old Heaven of the Zhou peoples and the related Heaven of the southern Chinese peoples whom the Zhou and their successors both conquered and attracted into their civilization.

In the short run, Buddhism swallowed both of these old Heavens. With no impiety intended, you might think of the Buddha as a kind of Donald Trump of Heavenly real estate, swallowing large territories with leveraged buyouts, and imposing his name on his spiritual acquisitions, just as Trump does.

The Buddhist universe swallowed the ancient Chinese cosmos. (Also like poor Trump, Buddhism eventually had to disgorge large chunks of these acquisitions, though even once independent again they retained substantial influences from Buddhism.)

A new Buddhist Heaven became available to potential rulers during this Age of Disunion, and as a consequence by the end of the 6th century AD, the fellows who founded the short-lived Sui and the much longer lasting Tang Dynasty that followed it from the beginning of the 7th to the beginning of the 10th century were able to create a newer and much more elaborately structured and larger Earth, which was to a significant degree a re-presentation of the Buddhist Heaven.

2. A New Template of Merit

This Buddhist cosmos was a more elaborately bureaucratic one. In re-presenting itself onto Earth, Heaven itself displayed a complex template of merit: the Buddhist notion of *karma*—the causal link between behavior on Earth and its consequences which transcended Earth. *Karma* in turn could be re-presented onto Earthly politics as the basis for the ever more powerful template of merit of an ever more dominant meritocracy.

That template came to involve the taking of formal written examinations for more purposes and administered in ever more rigorous fashion. The Han bureaucrats had at least a dim idea of the usefulness of formal exams, but were overtaken by the low morale caused by the crisis of civilization before they could do much to make written examinations the dominant mode for checking a candidate's fit to the template.

It was a second stage of high civilization trait to develop an ever bigger and more pure meritocratic component to the ruling class. At first this comprised only a slightly meritized aristocracy. But even then, though only aristocrats need apply, only *bright* aristocrats, who could pass the written exams, were to be chosen. Inevitably, the aristocratic component of the requirement became ever less crucial for selection.

The rise of the meritocracy meant that plutocrats were pushed to the side. At best only local plutocrats survived, and they tried to meritize and then aristocratize themselves just as quickly as they could. In that way China differed from the late ancient and early medieval West, where a feudal process did not occur until the transition into the second stage of high civilization. That delay inhibited the development of meritocracy in Europe until the last stages of that feudal process and its aftermath in early modern times. So while the Europeans continued to add plutocrats to their aristocrats, the Chinese gradually pushed their aristocrats aside and evolved ever more elaborately templated meritocrats instead.

Since most of you who read these words are likely apprentice meritocrats themselves, you may wish to cheer their growing dominance in late medieval and early modern China. Unfortunately, the last thousand years of Chinese history suggest that this tendency to develop an increasingly meritocratic ruling class was a decidedly mixed blessing.

3. The Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties

By the Song period, during the first three centuries of the current millennium, the meritocratic component of the ruling class reached parity of power with the aristocratic component. For a variety of reasons, some being historical accidents, by the end of the Song, the aristocratic component had all but disappeared, except here and there at the regional and local levels. The Yuan had a foreign aristocracy of Mongols and other Central Asians, but even that disappeared with the withdrawal of the Mongols back into Central Asia in the late 14th century. The overwhelmingly predominant wing of the ruling class during Ming times was meritocratic.

That alone should make Ming rather interesting to modern Western people whose ruling class is also becoming ever more purely meritocratic. Conversely, In my guise as a political historian, and because I work in a state university (which is even more purely meritocratic than the larger society outside), I can perform real time experiments locally that enable me to understand the internal political mechanisms of the Ming Dynasty. I can devise miniature versions of Ming institutions and "run" them locally. That this also annoys the dickens out of the Dean and my colleagues provides only adds to the satisfaction engendered by the exercise.

For example, one of the requirements of a pure meritocracy is something that we nowadays call "affirmative action," but at the political level it is usually geographical affirmative action rather than sexual or racial affirmative action that is needed. It turns out that unless geographic affirmative action is added to the template of merit to spread out recruitment of meritocrats roughly evenly over a state's territory, meritocrats will tend to come disproportionately from the richest places, and will be perceived as not representative of all the geographic components of the state over which they rule.

Aristocracies inherently take care of the problem of balanced distribution of their members. Aristocrats are, virtually by definition, equally spread out. Local aristocrats all have their altars to the local subdivision of Heaven spotted evenly over a territory in proportion to its population. So, as part of the inherent logic of having an aristocracy, affirmative action takes care of itself.

Unequal distribution is acceptable for a plutocracy because as markets spread, a plutocracy's base also spreads. Where markets don't exist or are poorly developed nobody misses the absence of plutocrats.

It is only meritocrats who will not necessarily be properly distributed without an affirmative action system, i.e. unless an affirmative action component is built into their template of merit.

Of course I encounter much resistance when I try to explain this to my white male academic colleagues. They do not like affirmative action since they are white males and affirmative action in our miniature equivalent to the Ming Dynasty favors women and people of color.

In 1990 I got the then chair of Psychology to nearly swallow his pipe by applying this argument to his situation. He was complaining that Psych needed more resources now that it has gone from 200 to 400 majors in two years. I said I had heard these new majors were mostly girls. He affirmed this. I further observed that a disproportionate number of these girls were both bright and pretty. I went on to argue that since WWU is a meritocracy, we must apply affirmative action rules. As it happens, I come from a department, History, which at that time was undersupplied with bright and pretty girls, but which had a surplus of ignorant and ugly boys. In accord with affirmative action principles, I would have liked to have this maldistribution corrected by exchanging his surplus with our surplus.

When the Psych chairman turned that reasonable proposal down, I observed that one alternative way to handle his surplus of majors, whatever their sex, would be to go over to a market model: Raise prices for psychology credits, which will drive out some of the less affluent of the bright and pretty girls. At the same time we would cut prices in the History Department, swallow our losses, but depending on the elasticity of demand for History courses on the part of bright and pretty girls, we might attract enough of them to our department to right the balance, while more affluent but nevertheless ignorant and ugly boys shifted over to Psychology. I found no takers for that proposal either. Fortunately, some other force has shifted pretty girls toward History majors since then. Life sometimes resolves our problems spontaneously.

When the Ming Dynasty was faced with

an overabundance of examination-passers from rich areas, it tended to tilt toward finagling with quotas rather than changing its template of merit. So too do modern state universities. One hopes we will not suffer the fate of the Ming Dynasty.

4. The Late Imperial and Post Imperial Crisis

Ming's pure meritocracy proved highly unstable. Absent an aristocracy, its men of merit had no easy way to limit the number of variant templates of merit and hence no way to limit the number of or dampen the intensity of quarrels among meritocratic factions. This opened the door to conquest of north China by a semi-pastoralist nation of Manchus from the northeast frontier region of subzone A3, and within a generation, allowed the extension of that conquest into southern China. The surviving Ming men of merit preferred to submit themselves to conquest by these Manchu foreign aristocrats rather than to ally themselves with an incipient national plutocracy of overseas merchants which had arisen on the sea frontier during late Ming times.

Late Ming factionalism may have been one of the early signs of the crisis of the second stage of high civilization. The Manchu conquest and the first century and a half of the rule of the Qing Dynasty they set up may have represented a temporary postponement of that crisis. The Manchus could not create a new Heaven for China, but they could enforce one of the more respectable of the existing competing Heavens: a Buddhist-influenced Confucianism created during Song times.

Unfortunately, this Heaven was showing signs of either relapsing back into Buddhism or turning into a fully secular post-Buddhist and post- Confucian vision of Earth freed from dependence upon any Heaven. The latter would have been the Chinese equivalent of European “modernity” since the 17th century.

In any event, by the late 18th and early 19th century, that crisis of civilization was in full bloom. The acid of the Chinese version of modernity was, aided by Western aggression, dissolving all the old Chinese Heavens. As a consequence, by the early 20th century, the old political order disintegrated, and for nearly two generations no one new order could replace it in a stable way.

A new meritocracy took shape even before the old political order disappeared. Its template of merit was nominally based on one or another Western political philosophy, but was really based upon a disguised version of Chinese secular modernity. This nativist secular modernity eventually merged with an analogous Marxist political ideology to form the Chinese version of the most powerful and evil of modern political ideologies—Marxism-Nativism (my generic label for what is more commonly known as “Marxism-Leninism”).

The conquest of China by Chinese Marxist-Nativists was completed by the middle of the 20th century. In form, it eerily echoed the pattern of the Manchu conquest of the 17th century: The role of the Manchu conquest aristocracy was played by the higher ranks of the Party, who likewise constituted an embryonic aristocracy. The Manchu Banner military units were matched by the People's Liberation Army. The Ming meritocrats' role was taken by the new meritocrats of the current century. There was even an analog after 1949 to the partly plutocratic remnant which took refuge on Taiwan during the generation after 1650.

After forty years, however, the modern analogs of the Manchus appear to be completing the analogy by having themselves after all only postponed rather than resolved China's crisis of civilization. As the millennium ends China appears as far from such a resolution as it was nearly a century ago when the old order entered into its final dissolution.

The new Party aristocracy appears to have lost its version of Heaven (really only a vision of Earth re-presented *up* into a decidedly mundane Heaven, which is what you would expect during a crisis of civilization). With the delegitimization of the Party aristocracy, the new meritocracy is bereft of guidance and so cannot rule coherently on its own.

Chinese plutocrats appear to be making a comeback. They actually function as the chief members of the ruling class in the sovereign or near sovereign states of overseas China (Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong), and by the mid-1980s they, in alliance with successful indigenous men of the market, were beginning to achieve a measure of power locally within China itself. Their power has, however, sagged during the ‘90s. Perhaps the reason for this lack of political success on the mainland is that they lack a generally persuasive vision of Heaven for them to re-present as a plutocrat-dominated state on Earth. It may be that the revival of a Christian-influenced Buddhism and Taoism, and the renewed vitality of a Christian and Buddhist-influenced Confucianism, both in overseas China and at home will, or perhaps already has provided that Heaven.

But whatever happens, we now know that the Marxist-Nativist Party state which has dominated the last forty years of China's political life has merely deepened, but cannot on its own resolve China's version of the worldwide crisis of the current stage of civilization.

Suggested Further Reading:

Kaplan, Edward. *An Introduction To East Asian Civilizations: The Political History of China, Mongolia, Korea And Japan From An Economic and Social History Perspective.* Bellingham, 1994. Ray Huang's *China: A Macrohistory* is a useful counterirritant to the argument in this text, Huang arguing that bureaucratic techniques have been inadequate and insufficiently backed by industrial technology rather than overdeveloped as Kaplan argues.