

**AP05:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVIDENCE ON EARLY
STATE FORMATION
IN CHINA
(4/89, 11/89, 12/90; 1/95, 9/96)**

A. Archaeological Knowledge

5a. How do the materials used by archaeology and the inherent logic of their use condition the conclusions reached from them concerning political history?

1. History and Archaeology

We can now get down to cases and begin talking about hard, factual evidence, the sorts of things that no-nonsense archaeologists pluck out of the earth. Archaeologists are decent but intelligent manual laborers. Unlike most historians, they are willing to get their hands dirty (literally). In that respect they are merely outdoorsy historians, as compared with indoor historians who sit around in research libraries and archives getting pale and listless for lack of exercise. They do the equivalent of library and archival research, but also go out of doors, flinging strata around in addition to turning over pieces of paper at desks.

Archeologists are also rather tolerant, and so don't mind such talk as this. At most they point out that the analogy between papers in archivists' fileboxes and strata would be more exact if, as the historian examined each box of papers in an archive, he would read each piece of paper in succession, photograph it, and then take out his Zippo and light one edge, holding it until it burned up, and then go on to the next one, perhaps igniting the lower right hand corner as he reads it, so that he has to read fast enough to complete his perusal before the fire consumes it.

That is, the archeologist destroys the strata of earth in the process of examining them. Even a sloppy historian rarely does more than get the papers in the box out of the chronological order that either their original creator or the archivist had put them into when he filled the box.

Historians and archeologists also differ in the dimensions of time with which they deal. Because they deal in written documents, historians only have to handle 4,000 to 6,000 years worth of time. Mostly they deal with

much shorter stretches of time. The poor archeologists must handle much longer periods.

As do most paper documents, the archeologists' strata have dates attached to them, but they have to turn chemist or atomic physicist to be able to read these dates, and that has only become possible recently.

Until 1947, the only way to get an absolute date was if someone living at the time an object was produced wrote the date on some object an archaeologist later found. Then the atomic physical-chemists discovered Carbon-14 dating. Living things absorb both radioactive C-14 and non-radioactive C-12. After they die, they stop absorbing carbon and the C-14 decays into C-12 at a specific rate, taking several dozen thousand years to disappear altogether. By measuring the proportions between the two isotopes the archaeologist determines how long it has been since the object died.

For a while, however, C-14 dates were highly inaccurate. The atomic chemists assumed that there was always the same amount of Carbon-14 in the air, and that turned out to be a horrible mistake. There have been substantial variations in that figure depending on the number and intensity of volcanic eruptions at particular times. Fortunately, by examining the proportion of C-14 in the individual rings of certain long-lived trees, correction tables could be constructed. Tree-ring corrected C-14 dates have been available since the 1960s.

Several other radio-chemical dating methods have been introduced since then, enabling absolute dating to be extended back several million years. These innovations have obliged the archeologist to become still more of a scientific jack of all trades than the slacker historians who can still make do by reading dates off pieces of paper in the archives.

2. Stratigraphy and Context

There are many situations where the objects found lacked organic compounds as parts of them or placed near enough to them to provide some C-14. Then the archeologist has to settle for relative dates determined by the sequence of strata in the ground. If something was closer to the surface, it is normally presumed to be later in time.

The order and number of strata should provide at least a relative chronology. But stratigraphy can sometimes be deceptive. Natural processes can affect the sequence of strata, just as some sloppy predecessor historian can get the papers and/or boxes in an archive out of order. Sometimes someone reading the papers will not turn them face

down in a growing pile as he reads, then flip them over before replacing them in the box. Instead he will pile them face up, reversing the original order.

Nature sometimes does the same sort of thing to strata. When a stream runs through a pile of strata, it can erode the strata from the top down and then redeposit them downstream in reverse order. Strata ABCDE are redeposited as EDCBA. The archeologist must notice whether he is dealing with original strata or redeposited strata. Sometimes earth movements tilt strata toward or past the vertical, making it difficult to judge which stratum was originally uppermost.

Inferring contexts is also a problem. The appended illustration from K. C. Chang's *Re-thinking Archaeology* illustrates this problem. Chang's book is must reading for apprentice archeologists or even archeological groupies, like historians of the ancient world. The illustration shows a number of possible different contexts for the same set of objects having the same spatial relationship to each other. Notice that while the spatial relationship between the knife and the pot is the same in all four panels, the presence and orientation of the skeleton and the stratigraphy vary. However, those variations change the whole story being told.

Since the very act of excavation destroys such contexts, the archeologist has to reconstruct on paper and with photographs and line drawings and systematic ways of constructing computer data bases all of the reality that he has discovered and much of which he will inevitably destroy in the course of his excavation.

It is only recently that archeologists have begun to be sufficiently systematic as to preserve usefully detailed enough simulacra of these contexts. The pioneer Schliemann was a monstrosly destructive excavator. When he went digging for Troy he went through the strata as though he was excavating for a new skyscraper, destroying contexts as he dug.

The same is true of the traditional Chinese graverobber archeologists, even if they were working for some intellectually curious gentleman scholar. In some ways traditional Chinese archaeology was more destructive than early modern European digs. The latter only became important after 1700. Traditional Chinese archaeology was big business for a millennium before that.

even some of our various modern myths, and adds a measure of obdurate facticity to them.

B. Archaeology of Pre-State China

5b. In what sense does the archeological evidence suggest that the pre-state communities of ancient China may also have been "pre-Chinese?" In what ways do the material remains of pre-state China seem to resonate with the Confucian culture-hero myths, and also foreshadow material and non-material characteristics of later state-building communities?

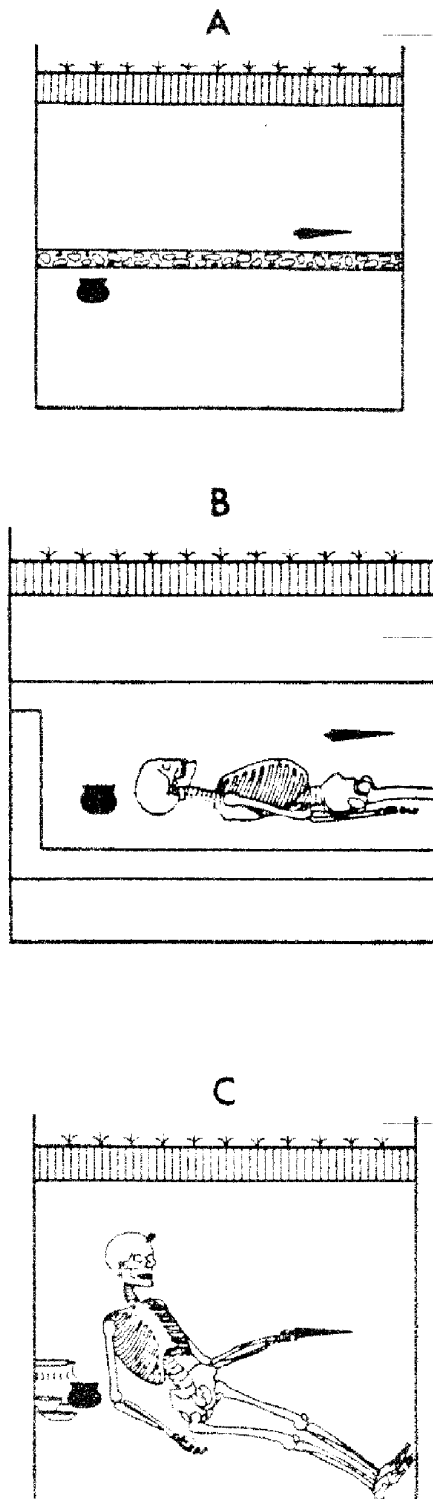
The beginning of the earliest stage of the runup toward the creation of the state in what is now China is datable in archeological terms to around 6,000 BC., but these beginnings are rather disconnected. It is as though you have found at a distance from each other the unfertilized egg and the sperm of the later Chinese civilization, with the egg in the neighborhood of Loyang, and called by the archeologists the Yangshao complex of cultures, and the sperm in the neighborhood of Shanghai, called by the archeologists the Qingliangang descended complex of cultures. (There are many other archeological labels used for various stages and offshoots of these two, but the c.6,000 BC versions of the cultures bearing these two names are likely the aboriginal roots of the two separate cultures. For the sake of simplicity I will use the labels Yangshao and Qingliangang to characterize the two regional cultures during the entire length of their evolution.)

This distinction between the two tributary streams has only become clear since the 1950s. As political historians, we needn't concern ourselves with the profoundly stateless Upper Paleolithic periods before 6,000 BC, for which the archeological evidence is still too scant and too muddled anyway. These two beginning Neolithic cultures were apparently the first to be both sedentary and agricultural in East Asia, and they each seem to contain traits that were destined within just 3,000 years to evolve and merge into aspects of state-producing cultures which became part of the common Chinese heritage.

At first, however, they seem to have had nothing to do with each other.

1. The Qingliangang Cultures

The Qingliangang complex of cultures belonged to the coastal region (Zone C of East Asia on the frontmatter map; cf. also the maps on p. 6 below.) and to the south. They may have originated in the neighborhood of



It is only since the 1920s and in a systematic way only since the late '40s that archeologists, East or West, have become consistently systematic enough to preserve the contexts that permit the objects being excavated to tell their story more fully.

3. Inferring Relationships From Things

Even so, there remains the much bigger problem of getting from objects and the facts they seem to embody to the ideas that may lie behind them. That is a big jump to make. Even when you have placed the things within their contexts, you must infer your way up to a whole complex of relationships implied by the existence of these things and their contexts. That is very hard to do. Neither the things themselves nor their physical contexts usually make it intuitively obvious what these larger relationships were, or into which of several possible relationships they fit. Objects the existence of which might have resolved such ambiguities might not have survived.

So while archaeology delivers to us objects that we cannot get any other way, it doesn't escape ambiguity any more successfully than the information we get from reading Confucian myths or the surviving copies of ancient documents.

As it turns out, however, archaeology often comes up with stories not incongruent with the traditional myths and documents or

modern Shanghai, or possibly further south, or even to the east on what is now the continental shelf, which was partly above water during and just after the last ice age. These cultures eventually expanded south and north along the coast, evolving as they spread. Eventually, one variant (it may also be an entirely separate but similar culture) reached southern Manchuria. Another branch spread up the Yangzi. Still another crossed the narrow waters to Taiwan.

The earliest surviving artifacts of this complex of cultures give even the amateur observer a vague feeling he is dealing with Southeast Asia. Houses were rectangular, framed of wood, and set up above the ground on elongated posts, apparently to keep them out of the wet in swampy areas.

The characteristic agriculture of the Qingliangang apparently involved chipping away at the ground with hoes, digging up edible roots, and perhaps some of the time planting rice in naturally and eventually artificially flooded fields. Though rice evokes an impulse to identify this culture as Chinese, the overall look of the techniques for its cultivation strikes one as more Polynesian than Chinese, in the same way that we feel we can tell the difference between a Mediterranean culture and a Middle European culture, just from some characteristic artifacts and crops. Even now most Chinese believe they can tell the difference between the Shanghai and Loyang styles of life in contemporary China from similar clues.

Coming to the archaeology of the Qingliangang complex of cultures fresh from examining the myths, one is tempted to make an intuitive leap and ask if Fuxi, the carpenter's square-wielding culture-hero with the not very intelligible (in Chinese) name was their founder, or the repository of their founder myths.

2. The Yangshao Cultures

The Yangshao cultures also started around 6,000 BC, i.e. at virtually the same time as the Qingliangang, and well within the margin of error inherent in C-14 dating. They began in the region (called the Fulcrum Subzone on the map of East Asia) stretching from just east of the Great Bend of the Yellow River extending to the neighborhood of Loyang, then spread first east beyond Zhengzhou, then west to Xi'an, and eventually beyond into the Gansu panhandle by the end of the 3rd millennium BC.

The Yangshao cultures also used the hoe and digging stick, but for millet rather than rice and edible roots. They kept goats and pigs, and built circular, semi-subterranean houses out of earth and straw. The material

basis of Yangshao life seems quite different from that of Qingliangang.

The Yangshao culture is also far more accessible to the tourist than is the Qingliangang complex, which is only available in bits and pieces in the Shanghai Museum, the connections between later developments and the aboriginal culture being hard to establish. In any event, few tourists go to Shanghai to study the Neolithic.

For Yangshao, even if you only go to Xi'an on the standard tourist circuit, you are likely to be taken to the Banpo Museum in the nearby suburbs. Banpo is the name of the modern village where one of the most elaborately excavated early-middle period Yangshao sites is located.

There one's intuition is goaded by reconstructed Yangshao houses, at first made of circular rammed earth walls with thatched roofs and their floors set several feet below ground level, and eventually with rectangular floor plans and ground level floors, but still made of earth and straw.

When you leave the museum and walk down some country road, you see contemporary rectangular farmhouses also made of rammed earth stiffened with straw and perhaps faced with cement, and (until recent prosperity permitted tile roofs) still thatched with straw. These are basically the same style of buildings built by the same techniques as in Yangshao times.

Then you look at the skeletons in the Yangshao graves and the paleontologists' reconstruction of the faces of these long dead people which allows you, so to speak, to look Yangshao man in the eye. Then you walk outside, and you see some fellow kicking the same brownish gray dust which formed the foundations of the six thousand year old houses in the museum, and he looks just like the plaster busts you just saw in the museum. By God, you exclaim, in a sort of secular epiphany. I saw the face and stuff of early China in that museum! And, like all thoughtful Americans, you realize what a rootless cosmopolitan you are.

The style of pottery has changed since c. 6,000 BC, and the Neolithic Revolution has given way to the Industrial Revolution (more or less). But that fellow you see sitting in front of his rammed earth house down the road from the Banpo Museum making circles in the dust with his foot is moving dirt molecules that may well have been part of the flesh and bone of his very own ancestors 6,000 or more years ago. The museum preserves the roots of the beginnings of the Chinese society we now know, and presumably also of its polity.

Maybe Banpo was Shennong's home town! (Likely not. If there was a Shennong, he likely lived further east, near Loyang

rather than Xi'an.)

The modern archeologists will not entirely disagree with such intuitions. Since time immemorial the Chinese have been referring to themselves as the Hua 華 (flowery) people. There is indeed a place near Loyang called Flowery Mountain (Huashan). Near it is a middle period Yangshao site with lots of representations of flowers painted on its pottery. Of course there are also plenty of other sites with flowers on their pottery.

However, this factoid reinforces that *gestalt*, pit of the stomach feeling that the Yangshao culture is at least the "egg" of the later Chinese society and its state. If there was a Shennong, he most likely appeared at some Yangshao site, and at least in some metaphorical sense, it must have been somewhere in the eastern range of the Yangshao zone where the succession from Shennong to Huangdi—from pre-state culture hero big man to state-building chieftain—took place.

This feeling is reinforced by the discovery of pictographs on Yangshao pottery, some of which look like numerals, and others like clan names or cartouches associated with clan names. We cannot read the latter, but some of the same principles of composition of ideographs employed in much later Chinese writing already seem to be present, at least as rough approximations, in some of these, and the principles of formation at least of numbers. Even a few pictographs, like the one for "fish," seem to be drawn as they would be much later (c.1200 BC) in the Shang Dynasty's oracle bone script.

3. Chinese Regionalism

For all we can tell, Qingliangang people may even have been physically somewhat different than Yangshao men. The Yangshao people were Mongoloid in physical type, though the definitive evidence provided by tooth shapes has not yet been fully examined. No Qingliangang burials have been discovered, but some brave physical anthropologists surmise that people who built raised longhouses like those built by modern Polynesians might also have been Polynesians, particularly since the odds are good that the Polynesians originated on the east coast of China. (Now if the physical anthropologists could only figure out just what they mean by the grabbag label "Polynesian," we would really know something!)

It would be anachronistic to call Yangshao and Qingliangang two different "nations," since "nation" implies "state," and both of these were pre-state cultures. They may, however, have been radically separate ethnic groups, with quite different material

cultures (and hence presumably non-material cultures as well).

The student of later Chinese politics also finds it significant that one is associated with the Yellow River valley (the "north") and the other with the Yangzi River valley and the east coast (the "south" in terms of later Chinese political geography). So what we may have here during the three millennia after c.6,000 BC are the still separate roots of later Chinese regionalism. Apparently it was only after c. 3,000 BC that these roots began to intertwine and even exchange some cultural gene plasm with each other. Nevertheless, they remain somewhat alien to each other to this day.

C. The Longshanoid Stage

5c. What sorts of material evidence survives indicating that the Longshanoid family of cultures was the product of Chinese rather than external stimuli, and that it was evolving state-building communities akin to those described in the Confucian and other myths?

1. Transition into the Longshanoid

It was at around 3,000 BC that these two regional cultures appear to have finally grown close enough toward each other to have begun to overlap in what is now western Shandong and northeastern Henan provinces. At that point, and quite suddenly, the next jump in the evolution of culture began. What some archeologists call the "Longshanoid horizon" had been crossed. The Late Neolithic, with all of the unmistakable signs of state-building associated with it is clearly present from the beginning.

These signs were just beginning to become visible in the last stages of the two preceding regional cultures. Even in late Yangshao, however, weapons still seem only to have been used for hunting rather than warfare. There was little or no evidence of class differentiation. You can imagine Engels come spinning out of his grave to proclaim that the end of Primitive Communism had not yet arrived. Women were still getting fancier grave goods at Banpo, either because they ruled in life, or because dominant males were worshippers of fecundity—the propensity of organic life to multiply—and fecundity was most conspicuously embodied in women.

Just before the Longshanoid horizon, however, in the latest (Dawenkou) stage that the archeologists still identify as late Yangshao, and in the area where the overlapping

with the eastern successor cultures to Qingliangang was soon to occur, there are signs that the hitherto isolated villages were no longer so isolated. At the very least they were beginning to share cemeteries. Three or four hamlets seem to share several cemeteries. This suggests the presence of extended families or clans, with each clan having segments resident in each hamlet, but with all members of each clan sharing a common cemetery.

The stratigraphy of one site in northeastern Henan shows the transition to the Longshanoid very clearly. This earliest known Longshanoid site has the foundations of its houses intrude downward into the remains of a very late Yangshao site, with no stratum between the two. This would appear to show that a particular Yangshao culture mutated suddenly into or was conquered by a Longshanoid culture group. The former explanation is favored by the fact that many traits are shared between the two strata, but some traits appear to have been brought into the Longshanoid stratum from the Qingliangang tradition which by this time was just down the road from this site.

The houses are no longer only round and with semi-subterranean floors. Some are square, and set atop rammed earth raised foundations. These fellows are not rice-growers. They are still Yangshao-style growers of millet. They also raise pigs, herd goats (or perhaps sheep, since the bones of the two species are hard to distinguish, even though their habits are quite different in life). Clearly many Yangshao traits carried over into the new stage.

Their pottery, however, is quite different from Yangshao's both in style and technology. Rather than being painted or incised, it is smooth and often dark in color. It is also thinner, somewhat harder, and eventually made on the potter's wheel rather than being built up out of coils of clay patted smooth by hand. It is closer in style to Qingliangang pottery than to Yangshao, but use of the potter's wheel is something not found in either of the predecessor cultures.

Burial practices also differ in subtle ways from those of the predecessor cultures, but they also varied by region as the new culture expanded its range, and the regional variations seem to be related to local pre-Longshanoid burial practices.

2. Material Signs of State-Building

Aside from Qingliangang-like new pottery traditions, the most important novelties are also indicators of state-building. Our intuitions sensitized by the Confucian myths, we are on the lookout for evidence of

Huangdi and Mrs. Huangdi bringing the two cultures together by creating the proto-state, and such evidence is available.

It is not just a matter of extended families being present. There appear to be ruling clans, and (with apologies to the ladies) these ruling clans are dominated by men. The Engels—quoting Chinese archaeologists are very clear on this point since it seems to be evidence for the Engelsian myth of the origins of the state. Some graves are now much bigger than others. These larger graves contain lots of rich burial goods, particularly weapons. They do not contain the bodies of women or children, but only those of adult males and human sacrifices.

Oracle bones like those much later employed by the Shang rulers to communicate with their dead ancestors also show up in Longshanoid sites. Like early Shang oracle bones (but unlike late Shang ones, which often contain writing) they bear holes, burn marks and the cracks induced by placing a hot coal in a man-made depression in the surface, but do not have writing on them to indicate the questions being asked of the oracle and the answers suggested by the angle of the crack. Ox scapulae (shoulder bones) are employed. Shang employed scapulae too, but also used plastrons (the belly shells of large subtropical turtles). The latter are not found in Longshanoid sites.

Clearly defensive fortifications make their first appearance. Yangshao villages, like the one at Banpo, seem to have at least occasionally been ringed by irregular oval-shaped ditches, perhaps for drainage or to keep wild animals out rather than other people. We don't have complete enough sites for any of the Qingliangang traditions to tell what (if anything) defined their village boundaries. Frequently, however, rammed earth walls were erected around the Longshanoid villages, just as in historical period villages in that part of China. Such walls would have required considerable labor, both to build and maintain.

There is even more direct evidence of warfare: In one site skeletons, some with arrowheads in their ribcages, are stuffed down a well.

The Chinese state-building phase must at least have entered its initial charismatic stage with the beginning of the Longshanoid in around 3,000 BC. Oddly enough, that is about when the scholars living at the turn of the Christian era (Liu Xiang and Liu Xin), who added a chronology to the already ancient myths, dated the shift from the two culture heroes, Fuxi and Shennong, to the charismatic inventor of the state, Huangdi.

The archaeology seems to confirm the traditional cultural traits of the society of the mythic Huangdi as well, and many of these

traits seem to indicate the presence of at least the beginnings of states and ruling classes.

3. Regional Longshanoid Variants

Once the Longshanoid horizon was crossed in one place, it was also gradually crossed in one after another of the regions and subregions of the two cultural traditions which had contributed to the original Longshanoid mutation.

The earliest Longshanoid culture grew out of the eastern wing of the Yangshao, but later versions sprouted in the central Yangshao and eventually in the westernmost Yangshao, which was also the last place to which the original Yangshao culture had spread. In each of these subregions the local variants and peculiarities of the Yangshao culture carried over across the Longshanoid cultural horizon and even to the later Bronze Age cultures of these subregions.

Eastern Yangshao traits are still recognizable in the Bronze Age Shang state, which appears to have originated there, even though it moved to the central subregion when it conquered the Xia state of the central subregion. The central subregion also remained unique when it crossed the Longshanoid horizon, and was still recognizably unique when it became the focus of the earliest Bronze Age culture, that of the Xia state. The westernmost Yangshao preserved its peculiarities after it finally crossed the Longshanoid horizon and eventually, last of all, gave rise to the middle to late Bronze Age Zhou state.

Similarly varying Longshanoid Late Neolithic cultures spread north and south into Qingliangang territory from the region of initial overlap with the late Yangshao. A northern Longshanoid established itself in southern Manchuria, a southern Longshanoid occupied the Yangzi delta. Southeast coast and Taiwanese Longshanoids have also been excavated over the last several decades. Yet another Longshanoid variant spread up to the middle reaches of the Yangzi valley.

Each of these retained what appear to have been local idiosyncrasies that can in some cases be traced back right to the beginnings of the Qingliangang version of the full Neolithic. These idiosyncrasies remained right through the Late Neolithic and show up among the local versions of the Bronze Age during the 2nd millennium and first half of the 1st millennium BC.

These southern cultures were those that the Shang and early Zhou Chinese records allude to as those of the Man barbarians, and then the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age states of Wu, Yue, Chu, Shu and Ba. The northern Longshanoid cultures merged into

what the Chinese eventually recognized as the proto-Korean cultures of ancient Choson.

4. The Direction of Causation

One big thing the archaeology does not settle is the direction of causation. It only allows us to trace the material consequences of perhaps non-material mutations into the beginnings of the Neolithic and then the Late Neolithic and finally the Bronze Age. It allows us to see the evidence of the consequences of state-creation beginning with the Late Neolithic and of full-blown state-elaboration with the coming of the Bronze Age.

The impulse of some people who come at this story from the standpoint of the archaeological evidence is to assume that the material changes must have come first and caused the political changes. They postulate a shift from slash-and-burn to steady-state/fallow field agriculture to account for the shift into the Late Neolithic. Or maybe, they surmise, these proto-Chinese invented the scratch plow—a slight improvement on the hoe which cut grooves in the fields but lacked a moldboard to turn the soil over.

Could be. It is just that there is no evidence that these material changes took place at the right times. No one has dug up any scratch plows early enough. That is embarrassing. It is hard to be a material determinist without all the appropriate material evidence in place. Some speculate there was a shift from millet to wheat. But we are still not absolutely sure wheat was even available that early to serve as the vehicle for the transition into the Late Neolithic, and it was not much used in north China until late in the 1st millennium AD.

But the Longshanoid communities were obviously bigger, and more resources were being diverted to a ruling class. What kind of change could have made that possible?

Maybe there was no great material change. Maybe a few fellows invented the idea of rulership, turned themselves into rulers and eventually their families and friends into a ruling class. Perhaps that made specialization possible when some people began to specialize in making certain tribute goods for the rulers. Specialization would have inherently increased productivity even without new material techniques, since practice makes perfect.

A few people may have become the very first specialists because the chieftains appointed them to specialize in certain activities. Perhaps they specialized in production of certain goods intended solely to be offered as tribute to the chieftains. It would not take many generations before the presence of one

set of specialists suggested other specialties to both rulers and ruled.

Perhaps this speculation about the priority of the state's invention over the invention of material techniques that served its rulers merely postpones the more fundamental question. We must still ask, what was the occasion for this non-material change? Why might it have suddenly occurred at one time rather than another to some people to discover Heaven and claim Sage status?

Maybe life was getting just complicated enough even in the late Yangshao stage so that some were tempted to ask how to get around the increased strain on everyone's nervous systems caused by having communities of several hundred people instead of several dozen people being placed closer to each other in the most favored locations.

With these communities closer together and contacts between communities becoming harder to avoid, and with some neighboring communities belonging to an alien culture as the two pioneering Neolithic cultures grew toward each other, envy-avoidance would become ever dicier.

Doubling of a community's population would tend to quadruple pairs of potentially envy-inducing contacts. People would turn ever nastier as they got more nervous under such circumstances.

Perhaps in response they began to relax the peculiar sexual inhibitions carried over from Upper Paleolithic times that had traditionally kept populations from increasing too rapidly, and this further increased population and rendered them still more nervous, even though simple agriculture could continue to cope because even without further technical development it could feed many more people per acre than food gathering could.

At first the excess population could be budded off into new communities (hence the spread of Yangshao and Qingliangang cultures attested by the archeological record), but eventually these new communities had to be spotted close enough to their origins that interrelations with the home community could not be avoided.

With the old Paleolithic rules relaxed, a few dominant males could exercise their will on the village women so much more often that they were tempted to speculate about what made them so special. When what turned out to be the last stage of a Yangshao community bumped into a Qingliangang community, with its rectangular houses and funny talk, some dominant fellow (let's call him Huangdi I) decided to learn something from the strangers. Seeing the drastic difference between two communities on Earth, he perhaps made an intuitive leap to recognize the existence of Heaven as being even more different from Earth than both the Yangshao

and Qingliangang were from each other. Spirit, he surmised, is not only squished inside the rocks and trees and mountains of Earth. Maybe Heaven begins just outside of Earth, just above it; much as the other culture is just over the horizon from us.

We can imagine this creative response to the generalized nervousness at the margin of early Neolithic life suggesting to some proto-Sage in this late Yangshao community that he invent Heaven using a few borrowed traits from the nearby Qingliangang. The result would be the first Longshanoid state-building culture.

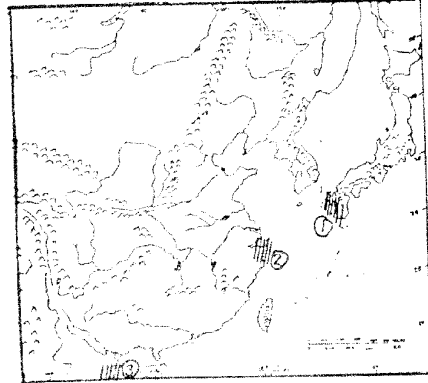
Once Huangdi I had imagined Heaven, he could then turn back to his fellow villagers and assure them they had nothing to be nervous or envious about. Since Huangdi I had found Heaven, if they did what he told them to do, all would be well. Impressed by his ideas, they believed him, followed him, and together changed human social life all out of recognition. Perhaps it took two or three Huangdis to do the job over several generations. But given the sharp change from one stratum to the next, once people finally decided to change, they changed suddenly and radically.

The above scenario is also perfectly consistent with the archaeological evidence. It merely suggests that a set of spiritual discoveries had to be tripped off by what at most was mere physical growth, that these spiritual discoveries would logically have led to the creation of the state, and that state creation had material consequences, one of which would have been the creation of specialties. Once specialization appeared, even absent new technology, more stuff could have been produced. Since the specialists came into existence to produce tribute for the Sagely chieftain, the state must be given credit for the effective invention of specialization and the material changes which were its consequence.

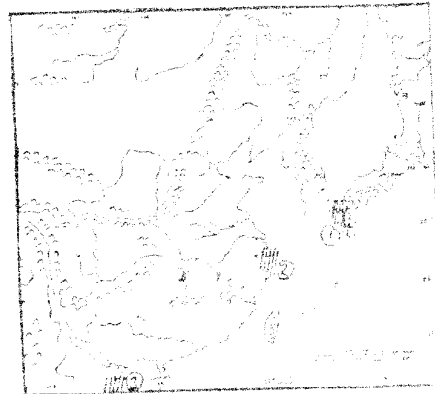
Can one prove this? No. Is this sort of explanation congruent with the data? Yes. It also goes beyond the data. It is a myth. Is it an intrinsically more plausible myth than the Marxist myth? I think so, but constrained by both the evidence and the logic of the situation, you must judge that for yourself.

Suggested Further Reading:

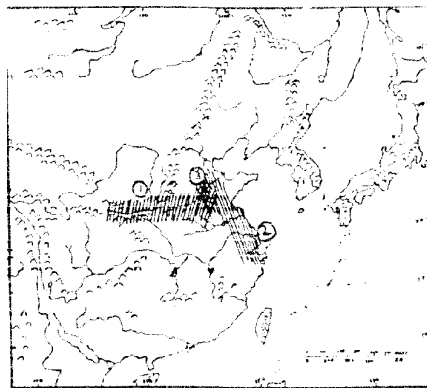
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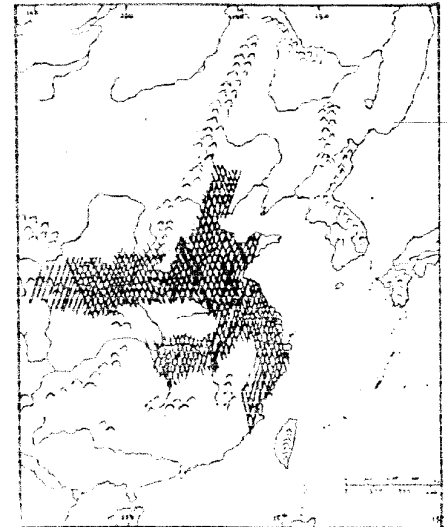
Late Paleolithic: 1. Proto-Jomon
 2. Wannian 3. Huabinh



Beginning Full Neolithic: 1. Yangshao
 2. Qingliangang



Beginning Late Neolithic:
 1. Yangshao Full Neolithic spreads east and then west.
 2. Qingliangang spreads north and south.
 3. First Longshanoid Late Neolithic.



Longshanoid spreads, 3,000-2,000 BC.
 (Note residual Yangshao in west.)