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## The Origins of the Name „Middle State”

The term „Middle State” (*Zhongguo*) that the Chinese have used to name their homeland since antiquity and now, is, for sure, most special. Clearly, it comes neither from an ethnonym nor from a toponym as is the case with many other political entities, but it is connected with definite philosophies and world outlook. What is more, for more than two thousand years this term carried in its wake some ideological contents conventionally called as sinocentrism.

Hence many questions arise: Why and since when have the Chinese named their country in this strange way? How their concepts of the state have evolved? Did they really believe, as is often claimed, from the dawning of their history that they inhabited “the world centre”?

Since most of the various matters related to this central problem have not been studied in detail, it is not possible in every case to provide a fully satisfying answer to the questions posed above<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. Primitive Middle Country ideas and imperial ideologies

The belief that one's community group lives in the centre of the world is one of the oldest, and very frequent, *weltanschauung* stere-

<sup>1</sup> Hu Houxuan studied some aspects of the formation of the name Middle State in the Shang period. Particularly wellknown is a small study: *Lun wufang guannian ji „Zhongguo” chengwei zhi qiyuan* (On the concept of five parts and the origin of the name „China”), in: *Jiaguxue Shang shi lun cong, chu ji* (A collection of historical studies on the Shang period made on the basis of oracle-bone inscriptions, part I), Jilu Daxue 1944, Chengdu (Reprint: part I Taipei 1972, pp. 383 - 388).

Another great scholar who was concerned with many problems connected not so much with the name only, but also the ideology of Middle State, was Gu Jiegang. He wrote and inspired a substantial number of interesting works published in the journal *Yugong* which he edited in the 1930s.

Of foreign scholars mention should be made of H. G. Creel who devoted a good deal of attention to the ideology of Middle State in the antiquity, to the ways of approaching China and to terminology. See: *The Origin of Statecraft in China*, vol. I *The Western Chou Empire*, University of Chicago Press 1970, pp. 196 - 198.

otypes. One comes across it with many African and Asian peoples, with the natives of Australia. Even the Jerusalem temple in the belief of its contemporaries and in the belief of the Europeans until the Renaissance was in the centre of the world.

According to those concepts, the various peoples believed that the land they inhabited was the only area infused with order by the mythical heroes and adapted for life, permeated with sacredness through appropriate rites. On the other hand, they thought that the external areas were inhabited by demons and evil spirits and fraught with thousands of perils. An important place in that system of beliefs is usually occupied by a holy mountain, the centre of the cosmos, linking Earth to Heaven, the world of people to the world of spirits, or even to Hell — the third level of existence. The mountain used to be called the navel of Heaven and Earth and believed to be knitting together the various levels of existence and thus in a way sacralizing "our world" — the world of the humans. The same function is found to be performed by the cosmic tree or a syncretic image of the cosmic tree on a central mountain. Their ritual equivalent may occur as a pole designating the middle of the world and transferred by a nomadic tribe from one place to another. It is worthwhile noting that the holy mountain also was "transferable". The scanty sources on the inception of the Chinese history supply evidence that a tribe which had moved to a different area applied the former name of holy mountain to a similar mountain standing out of the new territory. In that way, the traditional sanctified order of space could be projected on to a new territory and the transfer of a people was tantamount to the transfer of not only key toponymic elements, but also the beliefs and institutions related to them<sup>2</sup>.

Mircea Eliade proceeded from African, Near-Eastern and, partly, Australian material to emphasize a three-tier concept of the universe: Earth, Heaven above and Underworld<sup>3</sup>. Stratanowich, drawing on Asian sources, pointed up that the concept of hell appeared to have been comparatively late, while many peoples of that continent divided the universe into the world of the humans, the land of the forebears closely related to it, and the remote Heaven inhabited by both evil and good spirits. The concept could be sometimes represented in the form of an egg — the spheres surrounding the human world<sup>4</sup>. One qualification should be made, however, namely that the human world was conceived of in a specific way. According to animistic beliefs, "our world"

<sup>2</sup> Li Zongtong, *Zhongguo gudai shehui shi* (A social history of Ancient China), vol. I, Taipei 1963, pp. 107 - 111.

<sup>3</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour, archétypes et répétition*, Paris 1949, Gallimard.

<sup>4</sup> G. G. Stratanowič, *Narodnye verovanja naselenja Indokitaja*, Moskva 1978 („Nauka" Publishers), pp. 128 - 130.

was also teeming with indwelling spirits to every material form — mountains, rivers, pieces of land, trees or animals — like to every human. Consequently, the division into the above specified spheres of existence did not mean the juxtaposition of the material world of humans and objects, and the world of spirits. That division was made according to a different principle, because every of the spheres was material as well as spiritual.

Stratanowich also indicated that "the cosmos navel" was sometimes fixed not in the centre of an inhabited territory but on its edge. He presented multifarious variants of the primitive concepts of the universe that cannot be brought down to a single model, even though they sometimes show relevant similarities. Above all, they always have one common element: a people's own area is treated by them as separate and cosmologically juxtaposed with "the space of darkness", "spirits" etc.<sup>5</sup>.

However, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the question of the boundary between an "own area" and a "foreign area", between an "own people" and a "foreign people". Their juxtaposition could not have been actually as sharp as it is often presented in literature. The prestate communities, our chief concern here, were usually organized through kin ties. The principles according to which the people of common lineage combined to form the clan and the clans combined to form the tribes, entailed a particular way of viewing the human world. The kin bonds determined the nearness of other community groups in the form of concentric circles surrounding the ego group. Accordingly, the world was not divided into the own and foreign peoples by a single boundary but it split into groups of more and more distant kinsmen (and relatives) descending from increasingly distant common ancestors. Particular knowledge about the membership in a given lineage usually concerned the closest-related groups, while those less akin were described in increasingly collective names. It was only outside the boundary of the kin groups that the disquieting unknown and alien was to be found. The boundary in question could be indistinct because a different community group fell under a different reference system. So, the separation of "one's world" did not have to go along with the concept of one's "own" ethnos, or one's "own" territory. The "own" was surrounded by increasingly alien people and their lands.

The cosmological ethnocentric concepts, however, not infrequently treat in one form or another "own people" as the only people. They were closely connected with religious beliefs and rites, with the whole community organization. One comes across the most distinct and fullest such forms in the preliterate and pre-state communities undivided into classes. Clearly enough, the development of higher forms in social orga-

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 116 - 132.

nization led to a weakening and decay of the cosmological ethnocentric ideology. The recurrence of this trend in China was only partial because the state restored it in new forms. One can infer from the fragments of ancient myths, ancient stone reliefs, etc., that many elements of the beliefs mentioned here did occur in antiquity. And so, for instance, we come across the images of the tree growing in the centre of the world (hypothetically fixed in the South) and serving as a kind of a ladder for communications between Heaven and Earth<sup>6</sup>. That tree in some unclear way is related to Fuxi, the mythical predecessor of the Chinese. Very widespread were the holy mountain cults as evidenced by almost all ancient book. The mountains also served for communication with Heaven. This is most evident in the case of the mythical Kunlun mountains that were believed to lie somewhere in the West. That was where the souls of the ancestors stayed, various fabulous holy trees grew, the Heavenly Ruler's "lower palace" was located and the deities soared upwards and descended downwards<sup>7</sup>. There were many versions of the concepts of different levels of existence. Under one of them there was, alongside the human world, the level of primeval forebears, the level of the sun, of the moon, of the good and evil spirits, as well as the underworld and waters with their inhabitants<sup>8</sup>.

It can be inferred that in the early antiquity many Chinese tribes had their own, different holy mountains which later fell into oblivion or were made part of the new context of state cults and the nationwide holy mountain systems<sup>9</sup>.

It follows from the ancient inscriptions and books as well as from the characters ethymology that the rulers controlled all nature, sustained the sun in motion and the pattern of rainfalls and winds, etc. They also were the givers of vital powers responsible for the growth

<sup>6</sup> *Huainanzi* (The book of Prince Huainan), juan 4 Di xing, in: *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VII, Shanghai 1956, p. 57 (Zhonghua Shuju). The tree was also located in the Baimin Land lying across the seas. See: *Lü shi chun qiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü), You shi lan; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VI, p. 126.

In the instances of reference to the famous and generally available editions of the classic works, their titles, volumes and pages are given. A similar procedure applies when the particular edition or the commentary is important. In the instances of reference to various xylographic editions only the chapter (juan) or smaller units, if distinguished, are listed.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56-57. *Shan hai jing* (The Book of Mountains and Seas), juan 11 (Hai nei xi jing).

<sup>8</sup> An Zhimin, *Changsha xin faxiande Xi Han bohua shi tan* (An attempt at an analysis of the Western Han silk painting found in Changsha), Kaogu 1973, no. 1, p. 46-47. Beautiful reproductions of the painting are contained in the book: *Nouvelles découvertes archéologique en Chine*, Peking 1973.

<sup>9</sup> Li Zongtong, o.c., pp. 107-111. This researcher traces the mountain cult to totem beliefs, which, however, is rather doubtful.

of plants and reproduction of animals. The Old Chinese myths tell stories of great heroes who brought order into the confused world, of the creation of the sacralized social systems. So it can be hypothetically assumed that the ideology of cosmological ethnocentrism was not alien from the proto-Chinese peoples, though it is hard to establish to what extent it had been developed.

Though the processes of decay of primeval beliefs and cults clearly occurred in China, there is also clear evidence of their transformations, their more or less deliberate use for the requirements of new political structures. The primeval ethnocentric concepts became transformed into a political doctrine and determined the structure of the state. That process was not a linear one; earlier stages are not necessarily "the more primitive ones". Within a huge empire encompassing plentiful peoples with their beliefs which often had long disappeared from central areas, the evolution of the political system and the doctrines was a complicated one. One could even state downright that while the ideology of "cosmological politicentrism" was developing and strengthening, its phases from the Shang epoch, the Zhou and empire, were not a straight continuation of the primeval proto-Chinese beliefs, but their deliberate artificial reinstatement as an ideology that can serve the state well. Possibly that was inspired by other peoples, notably in the South, included in the orbit of the forming empire.

Analogous processes occurred, one should bear in mind, also in many other countries of Asia. It happened quite often, like in China, that the first state formations bringing together many once autonomous tribes and cities-states, relied on religious ideologies and pretended to universalism. The concept of the universal state-cosmos with its inevitable politicentrism and cosmological functions of authority justified in the best way the necessity of subordination to it of neighbour tribes and peoples who were familiar only with smaller local-tribal political structures. One could rebel against such a universal ruler, but one could hardly call in question the legitimacy and justification of its authority. Such concepts were developed, for example, in Accad which was governed by "the ruler of four parts of the world". The ancient India developed at least three such doctrines: the Buddhist *cakravarttina*, the Braminist *devaraja* and one concept adopted by Asoka that cannot be identified with the other two. Both the first concept and the latter assumed that the ruler — Dharma defender cannot subordinate to him others by force of arms, but through virtue as the Sages of ancient China advised. The concepts of the universal ruler and state-cosmos took hold in many countries of South-East Asia which had borrowed various elements of India's civilization. We find them in Java, Burma, the Angkor state and in Thailand. For example in Thailand the state-cosmos was presented in the form of a rectangle where the capital

is surrounded by a belt of internal and external territories beyond which the rest of the world extends<sup>10</sup>. The cosmological functions of the ruler appearing as the defender of religion and Virtue the source of vital powers, the superior to the people, spirits and all creatures, shaped under the influence of Hindu concepts, but they also, it appears, had roots in the vernacular tradition. It is not coincidental that in all states of the region we come across various forms of agrarian cults where the leading role is played by a king or an emperor who performs, among other things, a significant rite of spring ploughing. That was practised until the 20th century, almost until the last days of the monarchic systems. The state-cosmos ideologies served to strengthen the central authority and the position of the king. They were a product of the reinforcement and development of the state and, at the same time, a relevant factor accelerating these processes. Neither in the states of South-East Asia, nor in India or China appear these doctrines to be a primeval phenomenon, a direct continuation of the archaic cosmological ethnocentrism, but rather a comparatively late formation that developed along with the state structure. This thesis can be comparatively well substantiated by the history of the Middle State doctrine, owing to the richness of China's historical literature. The relatively late development of universal power ideas one can find in Europe too.

## 2. Two basic models of the early state organization in China

We come across two models of the early state organization in ancient Chinese texts. Under one of them the state was divided into provinces (usually 9, though sometimes 12 are cited) called *zhou* in Chinese<sup>11</sup>. Their oldest extensive description, the book "Tribute of Yu" (*Yu gong*) mentions the resources of individual districts, the characteristic traits of the people inhabiting them (chiefly concerning clothing), the routes by which they supply tribute and tax liabilities. This model does not distinguish any ethnos as a Chinese one nor any territory as having a superior civilization. Under this model all districts are equal before the authority, and the state is inhabited by multifarious peoples quite obviously also treated as equal<sup>12</sup>. In the records applying to the earliest

<sup>10</sup> W. I. Kornev, *Tajskij buddizm*, Moskva 1973, p. 84 - 101.

<sup>11</sup> According to one popular version the *zhou* provinces were established by Yao. During his reign Shun added three to the previous nine. Yu the Great, his successor, again established nine provinces. See: Ju Wanli, *Shang shu shu yi* (Book of Documents with explanations), Taipei 1962, p. 12. Sometimes the establishment of nine *you* (holdings) is attributed to Gong Gong (the father of Yu the Great?), the Yellow Emperor — Huangdi, or even the mythical forbear Fuxi.

<sup>12</sup> *Shang shu* (Book of Documents), juan 3, Yugong; J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics, with Translations, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. III, The Shoo King, Hong Kong University Press 1960, p. II., p. 92 -

period, the ruler is usually depicted as a frequent traveller, accompanied by his guard, all over the country for the purpose of inspections and ritual offerings. Sometimes the ruler, like Huangdi for instance, is said to have no permanent capital<sup>13</sup>. Corresponding with this model of the state are the records saying that the founder of the Xia state, Yu the Great, when visiting other territories complied with local customs. And so in the country of the naked, for example, he took off his clothes<sup>14</sup>, which in the light of the sinocentric views predominant since the second and the first century B. C. was a totally wrong behaviour. For the representative of the Middle State having the highest standard of culture should instruct other peoples and civilize them, that is impose on them the Chinese norms.

It is worth noting that although the province boundaries are not always clearly demarcated, it is theoretically possible to determine them precisely. The state, composed of a certain number of *zhou*, is, notwithstanding certain religious functions, an administrative structure of definite territories whose boundaries can be delineated<sup>15</sup>.

The other model described in the *Tribute of Yu* is thoroughly different. It concerns a state which is also supraethnic in its structural essence, but which, at the same time, is of the sinocentric universal character. There are internal boundaries within it and there are even so many of them that the boundary of the whole political entity becomes obliterated in effect. The world is depicted in the form of a square with the ruler's capital in its centre. The capital is surrounded by five belts of subordinate lands — *fu* — each of a width of 500 *li* (about 170 kilometres). The first of them — the square with the capital in its centre — is the *dian* land, the grain supplier, the successive belt — *hou* — assi-

- 151; B. Karlgren, *The Book of Documents*, The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Bulletin N. 22, Stockholm 1950, p. 12 - 18. This aspect of the non-sinocentric character of the *zhou* model was pointed to by Gu Jiegang, *Qin Han tongyi de youlai he Zhan'guo ren duiyu shijiede xiang xiang* (The causes of unification under Qin as well as Han and the views on the world held by the Warring States people), *Gu shi bian*, vol. II part I, Beijing 1930, p. 5. This was extensively substantiated by: Yuan Zhongsi, *Zi „Yu gong” zhi liang Han duiyu yi minzu shi guannian* (On the evolution of views on other nationalities from the times of the origin of the Tribute of Yu to both Han Dynasties), *Yugong* 1934, nr. 3, p. 29 - 30.

<sup>13</sup> Sima Qian, *Shi ji* (Historical Records), *juan 1* (Wudi benji), Edition: Zhonghua Shuju, vol. I, Beijing 1972, p. 6 - 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Lü shi chun qiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü), *Juan 15* Shen da lan, *Bu guang. Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VI, p. 178.

<sup>15</sup> The identification of the 9 provinces described in the *Tribute of Yu* are partly hypothetical. This was the subject of animated discussion in the 20th century. One of the best substantiated attempts at locating them is: Gu Jiegang, *Yugong* (The Tribute of Yu), in: Hou Renzhi (ed.), *Zhongguo gudai dili mingzhu xuandu* (Selected texts on the ancient geography of China), vol. I, Beijing 1959, p. 1 - 54.

gned people for various services (on its fringes — chiefly guard duty), the *sui* land defended the country. The *yao* land was compelled to service, and the *huang* land had no definite duty. According to the book it was a wild land on whose edges people even led nomadic lives.

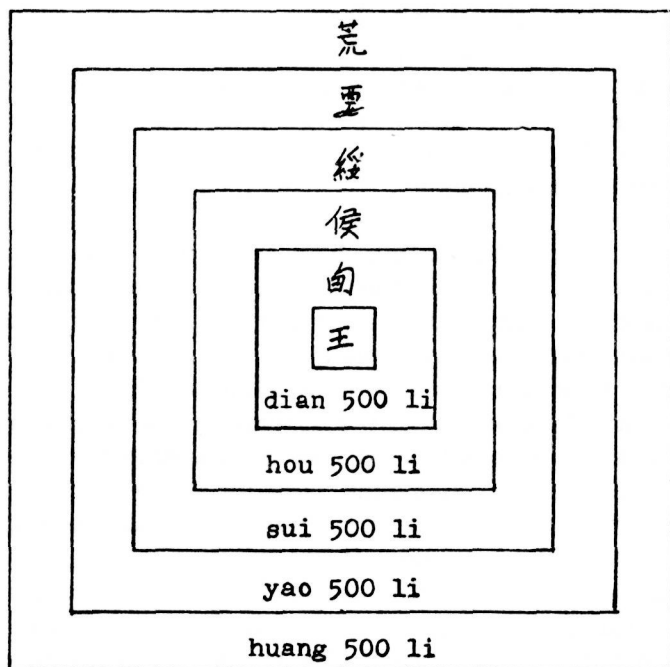


Fig. 1. Division of the state into *fu* — duty belts according to the *Tribute of Yu*

Each of the basic belts was also divided into zones. For example, it is said about the first belt — *dian* — surrounding the capital that people from its first zone of one hundred *li* paid tribute in the form of whole sheaves of grain, those from the second zone of one hundred *li* — ears of grain only, those from the third zone of one hundred *li* — only straw and manpower, from the fourth — unrefined grains, and from the fifth — shelled rice <sup>16</sup>.

Other texts, presumably later, mention a bigger number of belts, some even 11. We find such descriptions, among other books, in *Liji* (Book of Norms) and *Zhou li* (Book of Zhou Norms) and this system is mentioned in almost all famous ancient books <sup>17</sup>.

All these models depict the world in the shape of a square. Around the capital is the territory remaining under direct management of Tian-

<sup>16</sup> *Shang shu* (Book of Documents), juan 3, Yugong.

<sup>17</sup> A detailed analysis of these records was carried out by Gu Jiegang, in *Shilin zazhi* (Collection of Studies on History), Beijing 1963, p. 1 - 25.

zi — Son of Heaven, whereas further spaced were the lands under his effective control, administered by his vasals. These were sometimes distinguished, together with the capital area, as a Middle State — *Zhongguo*. Outside them extend the lands recognizing the moral-religious superiority of the Son of Heaven. The more distant they are the more nominal is their subordination and the more sporadic is their tribute. Along with the increase of the distance from the capital, the influence of the Middle State civilization becomes decreasingly weaker and the people more and more savage. Together with the Middle State they make up *Tianxia* — Everything under Heaven, or the World. Outside it is wilderness, jungles, deserts and seas washing the world on four sides. Therefore the term *Sihaizhinei* meaning Everything Between the Four Seas was used to denote it. Both the latter term and *Tianxia* was used in the ancient time to denote "China". On the other hand, *Zhongguo* — Middle State (or Middle States in the division period) carried a somewhat narrower meaning, because it did not apply to the whole territory recognizing the superiority of Son of Heaven.

Leaving aside the detailed descriptions of the service belts — *fu*, this model can be presented still in a different way. Namely, around the capital lie the lands providing food and performing various construction and production duties, further spaced are the lands supplying the manpower for major state undertakings and then come the lands under military jurisdiction providing the soldiers and defending the country. Beyond them there lies a buffer zone inhabited by pacified barbarians. It is only beyond the buffer zone that the savage barbarians invading their more civilized neighbours and the empire dwell.

The lands directly subordinate to the ruler not only are foremost in civilization, have the highest standard of culture, which was chiefly identified with social morality, but they are also most burdened with tributes and duties. So the "Chinese" territories were politically, but not economically, privileged. These liabilities were decreasing along with distance. More distant barbarians sent only symbolic tributes — products regarded as very valuable, such as albino animals and birds (white sparrows, white deers, etc.), rare bird species, medical herbs and animal parts (horns of rhinoceros).

The question arises whether the adoption of the state belt division model was actually connected with the fixing of the capital in the cosmos centre? For one can imagine a belt division without this assumption. The *Book of Documents* provides the following answer to this question: it was believed that the sacrifices made to the God on High (*Shangdi*) and the rites performed by the king should take place in the Earth centre (*tu zhong*)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. for example the text *Shang shu* and comments to it, chapter 11 Kang gao, chapter 14 Zhao gao (Si bu bei yao, part II, juan 8, p. 1a, 13b).

Later, even norms regulating the stay of the holy person of the ruler in the palace were elaborated. He changed the chambers, or rather pavilions, laid out in the capital centre and oriented to the parts of the world, depending on the season of the year. That rite obviously would lose its sacral meaning were it not held in the centre of the sacred space. In that case the ruler's habitation of the western, eastern or central chamber could not have any cosmological meaning<sup>19</sup>.

The cases of moving the capital without any cosmological justification and examination of the issue of central location indicate, however, that the beliefs connected with the "centre" should not be treated in an absolute way. Though sacrifices for the God on High should be made in the centre of earth, at the same time, the very fact of making them marked the centre. In studying the ancient texts one has the impression that the point in question is first of all a religious-political reference system, a relative centre, not the objectively measured middle of the world. The latter, without even undoing the sinocentric ideology could be placed outside China, which I have already mentioned.

It was believed in the late antiquity that such a sinocentric model of state organization had been introduced already by Yu the Great (*Da Yu*), the founder of the legendary Xia Dynasty (21st? — 17th? cent. B.C.) and was later carried on until the Zhou Dynasty, to the breakdown of China into a multitude of principalities in the 8th cent. B.C. This model was responsible for the picture of the world and political thinking of the Chinese, for the millennia that followed, it exerted an influence on the organization of the empire and its policy towards the world until the beginning of the 20th century. It justified treatment of the empire as a universal state exercising protection over the barbarians who were its vassals. According to this the vassal states were assigned various duties; they were classified into categories according to their distance, etc. On the other hand, the pattern of the country division into districts *zhou* attributed to the earliest epoch, remained only a piece of historical information. It rather affected the lexical sphere. For instance, China was described as *Jiuzhou* — Nine Provinces and sometimes the names of the regions preserved in the *Tribute of Yu* were used.

We find a beautiful description of China's other world in the well known poem "The Evocation of Spirits" (*Zhao hun*) originating with

<sup>19</sup> An extensive and detailed description of such rites is given by *Lü shi chun qiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü). This work contains data from various periods. Its edition was completed in the Han period. It reiterates with some changes the information contained in *Li ji* (The Book of Norms), the work attributed to Confucius but much later, edited also in the Han period. The Lü Annals is regarded as one of the best and most completely preserved ancient works. Cf. Zhang Xincheng *Wei shu tong kao* (A general survey of false books), Shanghai 1957, vol. II, pp. 1115 - 1116.

the Chu state and traditionally attributed to Qu Yuan (340 - 278). The civilized world, which is good and friendly to man and where life is safe and full of joy, is surrounded by wild lands. In the East reigns the fire killing any living creatures and evil giants lie in waiting for stray creatures. In the South there are rampant cannibals with painted faces and blackened teeth; there are also large snakes, lizards and foxes all out to kill the humans. In the West the traveller would run into boundless quicksands and giant monster-insects: ants like elephants and wasps like pumpkins. All plants there die out. In the North there extend ice deserts and snow-storms are raging.

The poet is also warning the soul against straying to Heaven and to Underworld. For him Heaven is a lair of evil creatures, tigers, wolves and giants in addition to the Ruler of Heaven<sup>20</sup>. Surprisingly, we do not find in this work any image of the four seas which usually occur (Cf. for example *Shan hai jing* — Book of Mountains and Seas).

At the beginning of the empire that sinocentric model of the world was still theoretically expanded. The central area was regarded as the most perfect in terms of sociopolitical structure and that also means morale. The Heavenly Will, a transcendental ethical factor, was present most fully in the human world there. The cosmic triad concept: Heaven embodying positive moral force, the condensation of the *yang* element, Earth — giving birth to all creatures, but passive- the condensation of the *yin* element and Man — the combination of the two elements, determined the key function of the ruler over the people. He represented the human kind before Heaven and Earth, he offered sacrifices and he sustained the whole cosmos in harmony through his rule. It was the ruler who ensured the growth of everything, the normal course of the winds and the rainfalls. It was also him who, through his beneficial influence and the whole state organization system, created man as a moral and cultured being in every biological specimen. Naturally, this still upgraded the rank of the emperor's moral-ritual leadership towards the barbarians whose manhood must have been limited. Under those concepts adopted during the Han Dynasty since the 2nd cent. B.C., the state was an organization encompassing the whole cosmos, it was not only a political order, but also a moral and sacral order and it administered both the people and the spirits (who were ranked similarly as the humans). Religious functions occupied an important place among the duties performed by the head of state — Son of Heaven and the administrative personnel. Even the functions connected with upbringing and education, with the care over proper social behaviour, had a sacral aspect, because they were strictly related to the whole natural cosmic order.

<sup>20</sup> Qu Yuan, *Chu ci* (the Songs from Chu), *Zhao hun* (The Evocation of the Spirit).

The holy Chinese land, the territory infused with sacredness, the most perfect one, was treated as the cradle of civilization, the place where the first humans found shelter or were begotten by the earliest ancestors: Fuxi and Nuwa, as well as the natural birthplace of the successive rulers-sages and the sages such as Confucius, Mencius and Laozi. It was here that morality began to be taught, that the customs and state structures — the vehicles for human culture — began taking shape. It was natural for the Sages to be born just here, to teach from here humanity revealing to it the *dao* — the prime principle of the world, its moral and natural order<sup>21</sup>. The state was the vehicle for the whole achievement of human culture created just by the Sages. Though it was sacral, it was also historical and shaped the reality and the transcendental, combining them in a lasting manner<sup>22</sup>. That “cosmological politicentrism” as the ideology and social order was destined to last along with the empire until as late as the early 20th century.

The capital city marks the center of the state and the cosmos. In this model the ruler is the connecting link of the various tiers of existence thus substituting in a way for the cosmological tree or the mountain. As the result, the History of the State is in a way a holy history because it presents the winning and the losing of the cosmic harmony by the humans. The throne marks the way of ascension towards the transcendental; the ideal rulers from the epoch of the state formation after their death became powerful spirits that were worshipped for thousands of years. At the same time, they represented and spoke for the higher, Heavenly order in the human and natural word on Earth.

Those sinocentric concepts determined the shape of religious rites. The emperor was treated as the ruler of the Center and thus the natural superior of the four parts of the world. They gave rise to the cult of Huangdi — Yellow Emperor — the mythical creator of the Chinese state treated as a spirit-guardian of the Center and superior to the spirits of the four parts of the world. The Emperor offered sacrifices not only to Heaven and Earth, but also to the patron of the Center and the spirits-rulers of the East, West, South and North in the temples erected around the capital. They were identified with the five

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<sup>21</sup> It is written in *Huainanzi*, for example, that in the Central Land (*zhong tu*) area there are many Sages (*sheng ren*) who personify its internal nature (*qi*), just as in the southern lands evergreen plants grow and in the northern lands are snows that never melt. *Huainanzi*, juan 4 Di xing; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VII, p. 59.

<sup>22</sup> One finds a good and documented presentation of these concepts in T. de Bary (ed), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York 1960, Columbia University Press, and J. K. Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order, Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations*, Cambridge Mass., 1968. These works, and same others, to spread the conviction that the sinocentric world view was absolutely predominant in China from the antiquity to the near past, what is inaccurate.

primary elements of the Cosmos (Wood, Metal, Water and Fire, Earth), colours and planets. The ruler of the Center used yellow colour and was identified with the earth element. The imperial palace, like its sacralized etiquette, assumed a cosmological character. These concepts did not appear overnight, but were taking shape gradually in the second half of the 1st millennium B.C.<sup>23</sup> Some of their elements, however, such as the laying out of the ruler's palaces, which were also cult buildings, according to the parts of the world, occurred from the beginning of Chinese statehood. Already at the beginning of the Shang epoch in the 17th cent. B.C. (?) we come across the characteristic layout of buildings where the ruler's throne was facing the South<sup>24</sup>. That played an important ideological-cult role until the end of the empire. It had many other corresponding elements in ideologies and religious practises, such as the cult of five holy mountains chosen according to the parts of the world. The spatial orientation was associated with the four season of the year, and the flow of time with the domination cycle of the five prime elements. The Chinese civilization attached much significance to the proper definition of time treated as something not homogeneous, whose quality changes in cycle in every period. Time, the time of florescence and dying, the time of the decline of the state, its disintegration and unification was not uniform similarly as not uniform was space and the territory always having a certain system of fluids, "quality". These time-space concepts in conjunction with the cult of the ancestors oriented historically the whole ideology of the state. After the fall of the Han Dynasty in the 3rd cent. A.D. and the disintegration of the state, some of those cults such as the worship of the five rulers of the parts of the world, were abandoned, whereas the Huangdi cult was modified. However, the basic framework of the beliefs and religious-ritual functions of the emperor connected with his cosmological function, was reconstructed after the periods of chaos and survived till the beginning of the 20th century.

The emperor, the world's ruler, in accord with the fairly widespread convictions, should not be over active, but should rather only attune his actions to the natural order of things, the natural course of the cosmic changes, the four seasons cycle, the years cycle, etc. That ancient concept of the "adjusting" ruler (*shun*) was developed and consolidated in the Han epoch by the bureaucratic machine to which only the re-

<sup>23</sup> A thorough analysis of the formation of these concepts and the rites connected with them in the Han period is given by Gu Jiegang, Yang Xianggui, *San huang kao* (Studies of Three Rulers), Beiping 1936. Descriptions of such beliefs and practices are supplied extensively by *Lü shi chun qiu*.

<sup>24</sup> *Henan Yanshi Erlitou zao Shang gongdian yizhi fajü jianbao* (Short report on the excavations of the early Shang period palace in Erlitou, Yanshi district, Henan province), Kaogu 1974, no. 4, p. 234 - 248.

igning but not the governing emperor was convenient. The inscription expressing this idea in the Taoist version of "no action" (*wu wei*) hangs until now over the imperial throne of the last dynasty in the central pavilion Zhong He in the palace-museum Gugong in Peking. Therefore, the chancellors in charge of the whole administration traditionally played a great role in the Chinese state.

According with the concepts voiced already by Confucius and developed by Mencius, the emperor should attain superior authority over all peoples of the world not through conquests, but by perfecting his virtues, cultivating his *de*, seeing to prosperity and morality in his country<sup>25</sup>. It was believed that the barbarians would come to pay tribute at the very sight of an enlightened rule and growth. That was the essence of King's Way (*wang dao*) as opposed to Hegemon-Tyrant's Way (*ba dao*) that is the rule based on terror within the country and conquests outside. The Middle State was to exercise a moral-religious leadership. In practice, it did not rule out either wars or conquests. As very opposition by a neighbour state or a people was regarded as a rebellion against the legitimate universal authority and for that the recalcitrant barbarians could and should be punished. Under this concept of universal state, anybody's refusal to recognize the emperor's authority undermined his authority also over his own country by prompting the suspicion that he has lost the Mandate of Heaven. Therefore, it had become a tradition with the empire that all known states were compelled to pay at least symbolic tribute.

One should note that apart from the sinocentric concepts in question, other concepts contradicting them had appeared before and during the former's development. One of such stronger currents of Chinese thinking was the presentation of holy mountains, or even whole continents, as lying across the seas. In that case China became only one of the worlds. Zou Yan (4th-3rd cent. B.C) for the first time interpreted in such a way the *zhou* concept. While preserving the figure 9 he treated *zhou* as continents, locating China on one of them. In sticking to the view that the Middle State was central among the nine districts of its continent and estimating the approximate size of the remaining lands, the conclusion was drawn that China accounted for a mere 1/81 part of the world<sup>26</sup>. Ancient rulers sent several expeditions in the search of

<sup>25</sup> This found reflection in his school's vision of China's history written down in the Book of Documents (*Shang shu*). Also cf. *Lunyu* juan 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, *Mengzi*, juan 1 and 12.

<sup>26</sup> We know this concept only from the much later summary of it by Sima Qian. The Zou Yan texts have not survived. Cf. Sima Qian, *Shi ji* (Historical Records), Meng Xun *Liezhuàn*; Gu Jiegang, *Qin Han tongyide youlai he Zhan'guo ren duiyu shijiede xiang xiang* (The genesis of the unification of state in the Qin-Han period and the views on the world held by the Warring States period), in: *Gu shi bian* (Discourses on Ancient History), vol. II, Beijing 1930, pp. 4-8.

miraculous islands across the sea. The promotion of the world pluralism concept was later facilitated by Buddhism which professed approximate ideas in locating the centre of the cosmos on the mythical Mount Meru and spreading tales of distant lands, wonder islands, etc. Via the cult of India — the homeland of Buddha Gautama that doctrine eroded the Middle State concept also in another aspect: it spoke of the existence of another, not wild, country situated beyond the Chinese frontiers and not falling under the emperor's authority. The quests after holy books, their study and translations undercut the belief that the Sages could be born only in China and that only China could produce holy books of instruction for humanity. No wonder then that the "learning of the Chinese from the barbarians" met with condemnation of Confucian scholars who represented the traditional sinocentric world outlook under which the social and sacral order was identified with the own state. One example of such anti-Buddhist tendencies were the Han Yu writings (768 - 824).

Among the name of China used in the antiquity one comes across, alongside the most frequent — Middle State (*Zhongguo*) and World (*Tianxia*), also such names as Middle Land (*Zhongtu*)<sup>27</sup>, Middle Province (*Qizhou*)<sup>28</sup>. Incidentally one also comes across Large Province (*Jizhou*)<sup>29</sup>. The most popular of those terms, however, was Holy Province (*Shenzhou*). The later term was introduced probably by the earlier-mentioned Zou Yan in the 4th-3rd cent. B.C.<sup>30</sup> Associating it with his concept of many continents, it should be translated as Holy Continent. Later, however, *Shenzhou* was interpreted as a central district and identified with China. Even in the present times this name of China is used in unofficial literature, in the posters hanging around the Tiananmen Square in Peking, which is evidence of its deep-rooted presence in social consciousness<sup>31</sup>.

One should remark, however, that in the ancient times the term *Shenzhou* did not always served to denote China. *Huainanzi* — the work probably written in the 2nd cent. B.C., presents a schematic division of the world, interpreted as a continent, into nine provinces. The Central Province called Large District (*Jizhou*) was surrounded on the South, South-West, West, North-West, etc., by the eight other provinces

<sup>27</sup> *Huainanzi*, juan 4 Di xing; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VII, p. 55, 59.

<sup>28</sup> This term also occurs, among other books, in the *Erya* and *Liezi*. Cf. its detailed treatment: Liu Pansui, „*Qizhou*” ji *Zhongguo jie* (Explanation of the name *Qizhou* that is *Zhongguo*), *Yugong* 1934, no. 5, p. 5-6. *Eryashu* (*Erya* Vocabulary with comments), juan 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Huainanzi*, juan 4 Di xing; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VII, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> *Cihai* (The Sea of Words), Shanghai 1948, p. 979.

<sup>31</sup> The author read such leaflets in January 1978. The term also occurred with the printing of such leaflets. Cf. Chinese Literature 1979, no. 3, p. 15.

oriented according to the parts of the world. It was just the South-Eastern province that was called Holy Province (*Shenzhou*)<sup>32</sup>.

Under this model, just like under the earlier mentioned belt division of the world, China, depicted as a closed political territorial organization, fails to fit. As the model describes the whole world extending, to the fabulous edges, to the four seas. The central province is delineated rather narrowly and obviously does not encompass the whole imperial territory, whereas the remaining provinces include both the Chinese lands and the distant edges. However, the central lands clearly play the prime role.

In the above model and in the belt pattern the centre of the world was fixed in the location of the ruler's capital which was a kind of a "keystone" of the entire cosmic structure. But in the ancient times the world centre was also located on the edges of the world known to the Chinese. According to one popular version, the Middle of Heaven and Earth (*Tian di zhi zhong*) was denoted by the Jianmu tree growing in the Duguang country on the eternal spring plain located in the South-West<sup>33</sup>. The southern location of the plain is supported by the property attributed to the tree to give no shadow at the height of noon because the sun was standing in zenith above it. Another concept maintained that the world centre were the Kunlun mountains located in the far West or the North-West<sup>34</sup>. One should note that in the politicentric model the capital city functioned as the factual centre of the world and the cosmic axis, but in theory it was usually not attributed the *expressis verbis* role as the case was in the two above-cited instances of the mountains and the tree. The changes of the location of the capital were obvious, given the good knowledge of one's territory and developed history.

The issue of the organizational model of the early state was taken up many times in the Chinese historical literature with references being usually made to the descriptions contained in the *Tribute of Yu*. That model was chiefly interesting in that it was the oldest preserved geographical description of ancient China. According to its fairly common identification it is a comparatively large territory reaching Korea in the North, Turkestan and northern Tibet in the West, and what today

<sup>32</sup> *Huainanzi*, juan 4 *Di xing*; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VII, p. 55. We find a similar description of the nine provinces with the royal Zhou Dynasty province as the central one in *Lü shi chun qiu*. Perhaps it is the earlier concept. *Lü shi chun qiu*, You shi lan 1; (*Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VI, p. 125). Let us note that this text similarly divides the heaven into nine parts, describes its stars and distinguishes also the „central plain" area, with which the distinguishing of nine mountains corresponds. *Ibidem* p. 124.

<sup>33</sup> *Huainanzi*, juan 4 *Di xing*; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VII, p. 57.

<sup>34</sup> Li Daoyuan, *Shui jing zhu* (Commentaries to the Book of the Rivers), part I, Shanghai 1958, p. 1.

are the provinces Sichuan, Guizhou and Guangdong in the South. The most accurate is the description of the Central-Western regions, but there are many mistakes in the description of the lower course of the Yangzjiang river and more distant southern areas<sup>35</sup>. Actually it applies to a territory incomparably vaster than the "aboriginal Chinese" territory at the end of the first millennium B.C.

It was traditionally assumed in historiography that the text in question was written in the Xia age, that is on the turn of the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C. But that was put in doubt as early as in the Song age (960 - 1279). The studies carried out in the 20th century consolidated the conclusion that the text was comparatively late and originated between the 6th and 4th cent. B.C. or even in the 3rd century B.C. For instance, Liang Qichao maintained that the people who lived in Western Zhou in the Shang epoch knew only the Huanghe basin and that the text *Yugong* consequently must have been written as late as under the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770 - 403 B.C.)<sup>36</sup>. Wei Jixian who made a detailed analysis of the geographical names used there, as well as the familiarity with the terrain, etc., arrived at the conclusion that the text was written in the Warring States period (403 - 221 B.C.) most probably in the Qin State. He even supplies the presumable date: between 316 and 290 B.C. He founded his conclusion on the changes of the geographical names connected with the correctly dated conquests and other political events. He also found that the text was unknown to Mencius (372 - 289)<sup>37</sup>. In turn Gu Jiegang analyzed the ancient notions of the world. He pointed out that until the mid 1st millennium B.C. small oikumena dimensions were given. It was only later that they began expanding rapidly. A new idea was connected with that — namely the diversity of that huge world. So according to him the *Tribute of Yu* could be written as late as in the Warring States Period. Moreover, he favoured the argument about the earlier knowledge of only the Huanghe basin and raised the issue of the spread of the idea of Chinese unity as late as then despite the different character of the states regarded as semi-barbarian<sup>38</sup>. He incidentally formulated even more far-going judgements. He claimed outright that *Tribute of Yu* was an ideological justification of the unification of the country by Qin Shihuangdi in

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gu Jiegang, *Yugong*..., p. 1 - 54.

<sup>36</sup> Liang Qichao, *Gu shu zhen wei ji qi niandai* (Authenticity and the period of the origin of ancient books). Beijing 1957, p. 106. Li Siying arrived at the similar conclusions based on the same substantiation. He asserted even that the text could have been written only at the end of that period. Li Siying, „*Yugong*” *de diwei* (The territories described in the *Tribute of Yu*), *Yugong* 1934, no. 1, p. 5 - 6.

<sup>37</sup> Zhang Xincheng (ed), o.c., vol. I, p. 166 - 167.

<sup>38</sup> Gu Jiegang, *Qin Han tongyide youlai*..., p. 2 - 9.

221 B.C. and its administrative division into districts — *zhou*<sup>39</sup>. Guo Moro, after analyzing the language of the text, the employed geographical names and mentions of the production of iron in the distant South, also favoured the view that the text could not be written earlier than in the Spring and Autumn Period. Having analyzed the ideological contents, the emphasis on the political unity of China, he even more reduced the age of the text associating it with the trends towards the unification in the 4th-3rd cent. B.C.<sup>40</sup> Fan Wenlan drew similar conclusions. He pointed to the social function of the text: the consolidation of the idea of China's political unity from the outset of its history and the ages-long vastness of its territory<sup>41</sup>.

More important arguments can be supplied in support of the Wei Jixian concept. The Qin State where the text is believed to have been written, strove for hegemony over the Chinese states and finally conquered them all while its ruler proclaimed himself an emperor. However, the Qin itself was treated as semi-barbarian. This would explain why the text is partly stripped of contemptuous treatment of the peoples who did not belong to the group of the proto-Chinese tribes and why it emphasizes the unity of the state so much.

Also many qualifications can be provided with respect to these arguments. First of all, one should draw a line between the shaping of some ideas and their record. In the epoch in question frequently records were made of the orally transmitted works — sometimes even for centuries. Therefore, the writing down of a text even with some modifications of the old tale does not have to be tantamount to the formation of the text. It may contain much earlier elements. This piecing together of some earlier tales appears to be supported by the presentation, without any explanation, of two glaringly different models of the division of the country into *zhou* and *fu*. Had the text been written by a single author, a thing which happened at the end of the reviewed period, it would have been homogeneous for sure. Moreover, its dating was based

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<sup>39</sup> Gu Jiegang, *Zhan'guo Qin Han jian rende zao wei yu bian wei* (The creation of false books and the discussions from the Warring States period to the Qin-Han period), in: *Gu shi bian*, vol. VII, part 1, Shanghai 1941, p. 23.

A similar conclusion — that the text might have been written only after the empire had been established, was drawn also by Fang Xiaoyue. See also by this author: *Shangshu jin yi* (The Book of Documents in the modern language), Shanghai 1958, p. 58 - 59.

<sup>40</sup> Zhang Xincheng, o.c., p. 175 - 180; Guo Moro, *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu* (Studies on the society of ancient China), Beijing 1964, p. 234 - 238, 273 - 279. Iron as the main argument for dating the text was also given by other scholars. For example Ju Wanli, *Shangshu shi yi* (Shangshu with explanations), Taipei 1967, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Fan Wenlan, *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian. Xiudiang ben diyi bian* (General concise history of China. The first revised edition), vol. I, Beijing 1964, p. 180 - 181.

on the use of some geographical names, familiarity with the terrain, etc. But one cannot rule out that the delineation of the *zhou* territory came late, while the original tale might have contained other locations and used old names. Or a late-ancient author might project the oral tradition stereotypes on to a territory familiar to him. Neither is it so indisputably sure that the Yangzijiāng basin was not known in the early antiquity. New archaeological findings show clearly enough how broad was the range of Shang cultural influence and trade ties. That objection was raised even as early as the 1930s when the works by Gu Jiegāng were published. The argument about the use of the character denoting „iron“, used before as a proof confirming the origin of the text not earlier than in the Spring and Autumn Period when that metal began to be smelted in China, now clearly speaks for the oldness of the text. Archaeological findings in Thailand prove that bronze was smelted from the mid of the 4th millennium B.C. while iron — in the mid of the 2nd millennium B.C.<sup>42</sup> So when the *Tribute of Yu* says that it was just the distant southern peoples that paid tribute to Yu in the form of various metal products, including iron, the information turns out to accord with the realities of the early antiquity. Metal products from South-Eastern Asia even might have reached, through many intermediate agents, to the Xia state and the memory of that must have survived for a very long time<sup>43</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the analysis of the text and the attempts at dating it fail to advance our knowledge concerning the dating of the state organizational models. Chinese researchers have had different views also on this subject.

Wei Jixian stated that though the very text of the *Tribute of Yu* was late, the idea of the country's division into 9 *zhou* was earlier<sup>44</sup>. Some scholars repeated this view many times voicing the supposition that the division into *zhou* idea appeared in the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C.<sup>45</sup> So far this term has been found neither in inscriptions on oracle bones dating back to the 2nd millennium B.C., nor even in inscriptions on bronze objects dating back to the 1st half of the 1st millennium B.C. We know this term only from the texts preserved and

<sup>42</sup> Chester Gorman, Pisit Charoenwongsā, *Ban Chiang: A Mosaic of Impressions from the First Two Years*, „Expedition“, 1976, no. 4, p. 14 - 26.

<sup>43</sup> This possibility of interpreting the *Tribute of Yu* was pointed up to me by Anneliese Gutkind-Bulling from the University of Pennsylvania who just carried out excavations in Thailand.

<sup>44</sup> Zhang Xincheng, o.c., pp. 166 - 167.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. for example Zhang Yinlin, *Ping Gu Jiegāng „Qin Han tongyide youlai he Zhan'guo ren duiyu shijiede xiang xiang“* (A critique of the article by Gu Jiegāng „The genesis of the unification of the state in the Qin Han period and the views on the world held by the people of the Warring States period“) in: *Gu shi bian*, vol. II, part 1, Beijing 1930, pp. 14 - 16. A similar stand is taken by a few other scholars who present their views in the same keynote.

from the hardly datable ancient books. It was also pointed up that the number 9 belongs to the category of empty, symbolic figures and means simply "many" or "all"<sup>46</sup>. The use of such empty figures and the lending of special meanings to numbers became popular in the Warring States Period. So perhaps it is not even possible to find the term "nine districts" in archaic texts.

Gu Jiegang held the view that concept of the division of the state into *zhou* was a late one, that it came from the Warring States Period, and that the division pattern into *fu* was indeed archaic and really occurred already in the first state formation known to us, namely Shang (1562? - 1066? B.C.). In his view the king's territories were surrounded by vassal lands supporting the former economically, and, further, by border provinces performing defence duties<sup>47</sup>. According to Hu Houxuan, one of the most prominent modern experts in Shang inscriptions, the conception of the state's division into two belts, in addition to the capital area, — the elementary form of the *fu* model — finds good support in the sources concerning that period, though nowhere is this model presented *expressis verbis*<sup>48</sup>.

Also other researchers of that period have voiced approximate views on the existence of the belt division in the Shang age. Chen Mengjia held the view that within the division into internal and external *fu* there were even more detailed differentiations: four belts surrounding the capital<sup>49</sup>. Ding Shan went even further by identifying the *fu* division described in the *Tribute of Yu* with the one really existing in the Shang state — namely the division into four *fu* — and introducing only slight modifications<sup>50</sup>. Not all scholars shared his standpoint. For example, Guo Moro asserted that the *fu* division pattern growing out of the feudal experience must have been late and could form in the Springs and Autumns Period (770 - 476 B.C.)<sup>51</sup>. However, the concepts of Gu Jiegang

<sup>46</sup> Zhang Gongliang, *Shuo „Yugong“ zhou shu yong jiu zhi gu* (Explanation of the causes of using the number 9 to describe the provinces in the Tribute of Yu), *Yugong* 1934, no. 4, pp. 14 - 17; Yu Haonian, *Zhi „Dagonbao Wenxue Fugang“ han* (Letter to the journal Dagonbao Wenxue Fugang), in: *Gu shi bian*, vol. II, part 2, Beijing 1930, p. 16 - 17 (and the editors' note, pp. 18 - 20). Gu Jiegang, *Yugong*..., p. 47; Fang Xiaoyue, o.c., p. 57 - 58.

<sup>47</sup> Gu Jiegang, *Shi lin za zhi* (Collection of Studies on History), Beijing 1963, p. 9 - 10.

<sup>48</sup> He expressed this view during a talk with the author in January 1978. It found reflection in his earlier publications, for example Hu Houxuan, *Yindai feng jian zhi du kao* (Study of the Shang period feudal system), in: *Jiaguxue Shang shi*..., vol. I, pp. 35 - 37.

<sup>49</sup> Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu* (Complete analysis of inscriptions on Yunxu oracle bones), Beijing 1958, p. 325.

<sup>50</sup> Ding Shan, *Jiaguwen suojian shizu jiqi zhidu* (Clans and their system in the light of oracle-bone and tortoise-shell inscriptions), Shanghai 1956, pp. 45 - 52.

<sup>51</sup> Guo Moro, *Zhongguo gudai shehui*..., pp. 237 - 238; Zhang Xincheng, o.c., vol. I, pp. 175 - 176.

and others seem to be supported by better arguments. The moderate opinion of Hu Houxuan appears to have been best substantiated by realities and sources.

Many scholars also concur that the oldest description of the *fu* is its mention in the "Records on the States" (*Guo yu*). The *Guo yu* say that within the state (*bang*) there is a *dian* belt, outside the state are *hou* — princes' lands, further are *bin* lands performing border guard functions, still further the belt *yao* of the barbarians Man and Yi (southern and eastern) and the *huang* land belt inhabited by the Di and Rong (northern and western barbarians)<sup>52</sup>. This pattern is approximate to the one described in the *Tribute of Yu*, but it has the particular differentiation into an internal and external belt and only after that belt the further *fu* come. The pattern also lacks in distance measurements and strict spatial differentiation. The mentioned barbarians are identified with the definite parts of the world and are likely to form not two successive belts, but one of a different character in North-West (nomads) than in South-East (farmers and hunters of the river valleys and mountains).

According to researchers, all the other patterns, including the *Tribute of Yu*, mentioning the larger number of belts and detailed descriptions, appear to be later, while the dimensions and identification of the *fu* kinds with the five ranks of the aristocratic homes governing them, date back to as late as the Warring States Period (403 - 221 B.C.). As pointed out by Hu Houxuan it was just that division into internal and external subordinate lands that is close to the Shang sources<sup>53</sup>. So it can be assumed that the elementary concept of the country's division into the lands of the king (tilled with the help of the vassals), and the internal and external subordinate lands chiefly performing defensive functions, indeed originated with the Shang period. The model of the state in the form of concentric belts around the capital and the lands of the dominant tribe, the definition of the state through the centre and not through the frontiers, responded to the experience and welt-

<sup>52</sup> *Guo yu* (Records on the States), *Zhou yu shang*. *Guo yu*, like many ancient books, is probably the work of many authors and came into being over a long period of time. The authorship and the dates of writing the individual parts are controversial. The general view is that part describing the Zhou state, containing the description of the three Chinese and two barbarian *fu*, is earlier and dates from the end of the 5th century B. C. Some scholars voiced the view that the text, or its major part, originated, like *Yugong*, with the Qin state. Cf. Zhang Xincheng, *o.c.*, vol. I, pp. 615 - 638.

<sup>53</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Yin dai fengjian* . . . , pp. 100 - 103; See also the detailed treatment: Gu Jiegang, *Yugong* . . . , pp. 1 - 20. Xu Susheng, *Zhongguo gushide chuanshuo shidai* (The legendary period of China's ancient history), Beijing 1960, p. 38 - 39. So on this question the views of the historians mentioned here converge on the earlier quoted Guo Moro.

anschauung of the kin-structure community that prevailed in the Shang period.

In the inscriptions from that period one often comes across the term "middle Shang" (*zhong Shang*) and the usage of the term "four parts" (*si fang*)<sup>54</sup>. *Shang* was often identified with the capital called Great or Heavenly City Shang (*Da yi Shang*, *Tian yi Shang*). Houxuan stated on this basis that actually it was already then that the concept of the oikumena division into five parts: Middle, East, West, North, South, took shape. From that he derived the later name Middle State (*Zhong guo*). But he made it clear that the concept of the five parts was not yet in operation in the Shang period. One spoke only of the four parts of the world and, in other contexts, Middle Shang which then meant Central Shang, was distinguished<sup>55</sup>. If we also recall that the Shang ruler performed cult functions towards *Shang Di* — God on High — towards the previous rulers being the empire's guardian spirits and also called *di*, as well as towards the spirits of the four parts of the world, then it will turn out that the ideas of the cosmological state arranging the world with reference to the "centre" — the ruler and his capital were shaped virtually as early as the 2nd millennium B.C., and, more strictly, at its end<sup>56</sup>. Xu Suscheng added a relevant complementary conclusion: though the belt division model was rooted in the practical experience of the Shang and really applied solutions it was, however, a purely conceptual formation shaped much later and also inspired by the daily practice of the feudal houses of the Zhou period dividing the duties between the settlements<sup>57</sup>.

It appears quite probable that already in the Shang period it was assumed that the four parts of the world, their patron spirits and peoples were naturally subordinate to the centre both in the religious and political aspect. Consequently the Shang authority demanded tribute and allegiance<sup>58</sup>. However, there are no evident records that would attest to the contemptuous treatment of other tribes. Conversely, it appears that the state was polyethnic or supraethnic and did not draw lines between the peoples inhabiting its territory and jointly contributing to a highstandard bronze culture. Yet a contemptuous attitude might

<sup>54</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Shi Yin dai qiunian yu sifang he sifangfeng de jisi* (Beginning for good crops in the Shang period through sacrifices made to Four Parts of the World and Four Winds). *Fudan Daxue Bao* 1956, no. 1, p. 71 - 75; Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci*..., p. 584 - 591, 639.

<sup>55</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Lun wufang guannian*...; by the same author. *Shi Yin dai qiunian*..., p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the analysis of the Shang religious beliefs in: Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci*..., p. 561 - 603.

<sup>57</sup> Xu Susheng, o.c., p. 33 - 39.

<sup>58</sup> L. I. Duman, *Vnešnye političeskie svjazi drevnogo Kitaja i istoki danničeskoj sistemy*, in: *Kitaj i sosedi v drevnosti i srednevekovje*, Moskva 1970, p. 13 - 36.

be applicable towards farther peoples at a lower level of civilization<sup>59</sup>. We will still return to some details of the Shang state concepts.

However, the above statements do not preclude entirely the issue of the precedence of *fu*.

According to Gu Jiegang the division into *zhou* was connected with a high level of state centralization, whereas the division into *fu* — with much greater regional autonomy. That was for him an essential argument speaking for the precedence of *fu*<sup>60</sup>. Gu Jiegang stuck to his old thesis also in later years and discussions. The division of the world into a royal district and an internal part, that is China, as well as an external part in the *fu* model, with the internal part being divided into nine districts, could appear as late as in the Warring States period. The division into *fu* once did really exist, while the division into *zhou* was only a concept which was applied in practice as late as during the empire under the influence of legends. So the *fu* pattern evolved from a real structure to an ideal model, while the *zhou* pattern evolved the other way round<sup>61</sup>. This does not seem convincing. Given a different interpretation of the *zhou* — not as provinces of the decentralized state, but as tribal "states" belonging to a rather loose union, the *zhou* may turn out the oldest political structure that existed still before the Shang period. The *fu* model actually needs much more marked subordination to the ruler of all tribes, much more expanded ideological and institutional structure, which requires a long time and presupposes stabilization of the predominant role by one tribe, or a group of related tribes — the district of the king. Yang Xianggui clearly treated the *fu* division model as an expression of the very strong drive for a high degree of the authority and state centralization<sup>62</sup>. This seems to be a correct approach.

Moreover, one should make the point that the sources such as Chinese myths and legends, which appear to depict the state-formative processes faithfully enough, represent a univocal approach to the issue: namely they date the *zhou* division in the past much more distant than the *fu* division. They connect the latter fact only with the founder of the first legendary Xia Dynasty. Legends attribute the division into *zhou* to various earlier rulers, but it is not always immediately clear if they mean the introduction of the model or only a new delineation of the earlier existing *zhou*.

Following that tradition many researchers assumed that the country's division into *zhou* is the oldest one, older than the text of the *Tribute*

<sup>59</sup> Cf. informations collected in: Ding Shan, *Jiaguwen suojian shizu jiqi zhidu* (Clans and kin system at oracle-bone inscriptions). Shanghai 1956.

<sup>60</sup> Gu Jiegang, *Qin Han tongyide youlai* . . . , p. 3 - 9.

<sup>61</sup> Gu Jiegang, *Yugong* . . . , p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Yang Xianggui, *Zhongguo gudai shehui yu gudai sixiang yanjiu* (Studies on the ancient society and the ancient thought) vol. I, Shanghai 1962, p. 178.

of Yu<sup>63</sup>. Etymologically, the character *zhou* most certainly comes from an elevation not inundated by rivers or island and hence it was treated as near in meaning to *qiu* (hill) and to *dao* (island). The latter could inspire the interpretation of the *zhou* as a continent. Yang Xianggui mentioned the existence of a specific period when people lived on hills to protect themselves against floods, while the ritual-religious superiors of the settlements had their abodes on very hill tops<sup>64</sup>. This view is only partly correct. It appears that hills indeed played a weighty role in the lives of China's earliest population. Apart from serving practical purposes, such as the advantage of dwelling on an elevation or protection against flooding, the hills were also objects and places of cults whose chief priests were settlement and tribal leaders. In the legends and the oldest books one comes across very often the term *si yue* which can be translated as Four Stewards of the Mountains. They occur as local chiefs controlled by legendary rulers, they are summoned to the sessions of the council deciding on the key state issues, on nominations, successions to the throne, etc. Their title can also mean „stewards of the four parts of the world”, that is „all stewards”. The term „hill” in its various implications is present in the names of legendary rulers. The sources often quote the hill where they came from.

There are many mentions of *si yue*, but they are nebulous, contradictory and concerning various kinds of *si yue*. Sometimes even the figure „five” is mentioned. Already the ancient had trouble explaining this term. Many works have been written about it. The invention of so many mutually corresponding names and in so many intricate ways

<sup>63</sup> This was raised immediately after the publication of the study by Gu Jie-gang. See: Discourse on this subject in Gu Shi bian, vol. II, part 2 Beijing 1930. Also cf: Fang Xiaoyue, o.c., pp. 57 - 59.

<sup>64</sup> Yang Xianggui, o.c., vol. I, pp. 160 - 163. In explaining the term *qiu* — hill Gu Jiegang arrived at similar conclusions. He believed that people took shelter on the hills against flooding. Hence *qiu* also meant a settlement, but also a province and therefore the „nine hills” were near in meaning to the „nine *zhou*”. Gu Jiegang, *Shuo qiu* (Explanation of the „hill”), Yugong 1934, no. 4, pp. 2 - 6.

One can also come across other explanations of the character *zhou*, namely its interpretation as an assemblage, gathering of people, that is a tribal group. See: Liang Yuandong, *Zhongguo zhengzhi shehui shi* (The social and political history of China), vol. I, Shanghai 1954, p. 8. As a matter of fact such interpretation does not contradict the previous one, but rather seems to derive from it. In the Shang period oracle-bone inscriptions *zhou* is a pictogram depicting an island, a land amidst flowing waters (Liang Donghan, *Hanzide jiegou ji qi liubian* — The construction of the characters and the trends of its transformations, Shanghai 1959, p. 93).

Gu Jiegang, who collected various data about *siyue* and *wuyue* from classical books, maintained that the concept of the Four Stewards is connected with one tribal group and dates to the Zhou period. On the other hand, the concept of Five Stewards with the middle being distinguished, comes only from the 2nd cent. B. C. Gu Jiegang, *Shi lin za zhi*..., p. 34 - 35.

does not seem possible. We, doubtless, have to do here with some archaic system. The term *si yue* seems to be connected with *zhou* which primarily could denote the land of a tribe worshipping one mountain. That would be a system indicating how a community became tied to a definite territory, how protostate tribal formations came into being and how they were subsequently integrated by a supratribal central organ: a ruler with a local leaders' council. It was from that system, from the tribal union, that the Chinese state actually grew out. Still the Shang state retained many traits of the tribal union, though they were gradually weaker. At that early stage a lasting domination by one tribe, its technological superiority, was out of the question. Hence the *zhou* system, described in the *Tribute of Yu*, treated all peoples and districts as equal to one another. The mentions of that primeval system revided at the end of the Springs and Autumns period, under a new situation of the states, disintegration into many self-dependent organisms, and the cultural pluralism of civilization which encompassed the distant peoples of the South and West who took vigorous part in their region's political life.

The *Huainanzi*-described system of nine *zhou* laid out so that the central *zhou* is surrounded by the other eight oriented according to the parts of the world, appears to be intermediate model between *zhou* and *fu* because it groups the districts around one — central — and according to eight directions. Such a model seems to be the latest one and it was probably only a product of imagination. It could be inspired by the political reality at the end of the Spring and Autumn period when the central, not big estate of the Zhou Dynasty kings was surrounded by the principalities recognizing the former's nominal superiority. The cabinet character is supported by the absence of the distinction of the eight directions in the earlier periods and also the logical schematism so characteristic of the thinking in the Warring States period. One should also take note of the Chinese authors' attempts to concert both models still in another way: the assertions that the *fu* model was being implemented through *zhou*, that is distant *zhou*, at a higher level of civilization, carried larger burden than the more distant, "wilder" ones<sup>65</sup>. Having analyzed in detail the *zhou* liabilities given in the *Tribute of Yu* and their hypothetical localization (according to Gu Jiegang) I have concluded that this theory is without foundation, because there are no traces of any spatial differentiation of the *zhou* liabilities.

In view of the occurrence of the space division pattern into four parts, beginning for sure with the Shang period, and the corresponding terms: Four Parts (*sifang*), Four Axes (*sige*) — the military districts of

<sup>65</sup> Xu Daoling, *Lun „Yugong” tianfu bu pingyue shi gu* (On the causes of unequal tax liabilities in the *Tribute of Yu*), *Yugong* 1934, no. 1, p. 6-7.

the East, West, North and South, Four Stewards of the Mountains (*siyue*), Four States (*siguo*), one can admit the thought about the existence of the old tradition of appointment by the ruler of an union ruler-hegemony of a definite part of the world. In that case the *zhou* spatial orientation would have some grounds, but only for four such provinces, not eight.

One should note, however, that the classical Chinese literature from the end of the 1st millennium B.C. and the writings of later periods very often treat the Nine Provinces (*Jiuzhou*) as synonymous with China — *Zhongguo* without referring to the *fu* belt structure.

### 3. Primordial names for political units and origins of the name "Middle State"

Now we can pose the fundamental question about the formation of the state concept in China and the name Middle State. We can have a fairly good insight into the processes of the state concept formation owing to the use of characters script by that civilization from its outset, from the end of the neolithic period.

The basic source for the earliest period are oracle-bone and tortoise-shell inscriptions made at the court of the Shang rulers. This is quite a specific source, but in view of the multitude of the oracles and the occasional references to various state and daily matters, as well as the large of preserved bones, it allows an insight into the system of political terms of those times<sup>66</sup>. Also preserved, though in not large amounts, are inscriptions on bronze ritual vessels. The number of the latter increased markedly in the first centuries of the new Zhou Dynasty (1066? - 403). They also represent a well-dated, wholly authentic, and, therefore, valuable text source. The ancient books are preserved only in their late re-edited form. As a rule they were remade over centuries and the very process of their composition cannot be strictly dated. Therefore, for any analysis of the transformations of the concepts and terms, they can be used only to a limited extent and mainly with regard to the latest centuries B.C.

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<sup>66</sup> The technique of the oracle, most simply, was the following. An inscription — a question was imposed on an especially prepared tortoise shell, a buffalo's or a deer's shoulder blade. After performing an appropriate rite the bone was touched with a hot-white metal bar. In effect it cracked into fissures which were interpreted either as a negative or as a positive answer. Later a note was made on whether the oracle proved true. The oracles of that kind were made in China still in the Neolithic period.

All in all more than 100,000 bones were found. Some were used for the oracles many times and therefore bear several inscriptions. The inscriptions employ about 4500 characters.

In the Shang period oracle bone inscriptions we do not find yet the term state (*guo*) in its full form, nor any name of the whole early „empire” political structure created by that dynasty. With reference to the vassal lands the inscriptions use the following terms: earth (*tu*), part (*fang*), war-axe (*ge*), estate (*bang*). The ethnonyms of the peoples and tribes most often carry the term part (*fang*) denoting a “tribal state”, for example Mafang, Longfang, Guifang. That term was also sometimes used in conjunction with the own territory of the Shang (Shangfang)<sup>67</sup>. So this term can be recognized as the basic name for a distinct political entity, for more or less autonomous “state”. In the inscriptions it occurs at least in two meanings: as the designation of a limited territory, a certain region, as well as the designation of a part of the world, a space extending far. In the first meaning it is sometimes used as an equivalent of earth (*tu*), can concern a region surrounding the capital and be equivalent to one of the four lands (*situ*) that is southern, northern, eastern and western. It is also, and quite often, used to denote approximately the distant territories. In that case the term *si fang* means rather: the states of the four parts of the world, all multifarious *fang*. In similar meanings the terms “many states” (*duo fang*) and province states (*bang fang*) are used. The term “four parts”, in place of their enumeration and in the sense “all”, entered practical use comparatively late — under Wuding<sup>68</sup>. Guo Moro raised the question of the religious importance of the *fang*. He pointed to close linkage between the terms *she* — the altar of earth spirit — and both other: *fang* and *tu*, to frequent combinations of *fang* and *she* and female spirits. So the *fang* cult was for him tantamount to the worship of female spirits. However, he identified *fang* in later periods with the matrilinear clan, which seems to have little confirmation<sup>69</sup>.

The term axe (*ge*) was used to denote the vassal states situated farther from the capital (between the lands subordinate to the king and the distant tribal territories) and performing chiefly defensive duties. That term was also used in collective sense for example in such forms as Souther Axes (*Nange*), Four Axes (*sige*) that is subordinate lands of the four parts of the world<sup>70</sup>.

An important term was *yi* denoting a settlement. Most often it was the seat of a clan surrounded by ramparts and containing an ancestors’

<sup>67</sup> Guo Moro, *Jiagu wenzi yanjiu* (Studies on oracle tortoise shell and bone inscriptions), Beijing 1952, p. 13b — 14a. Hu Houxuan, *Lun fang guannian...*, p. 386 - 387.

<sup>68</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Shi Yin dai qiunian...*, p. 61 - 82; Chen Mengjia, o.c., p. 325.

<sup>69</sup> Guo Moro, *Jiagu wenzi yanjiu...*, pp. 13b - 14a.

<sup>70</sup> Chen Mengjia, o.c., p. 220, 325.

temple<sup>71</sup>. The close of the Shang period saw the planned establishment of settlements and allotments of land to them. In the Zhou period that name became equivalent to state (*guo*) treated as a not large self-dependent political unit<sup>72</sup>. Such identification also occurred under the Shang period. Particularly often the Shang tribal lands were identified with Great City (*da yi*), but the term *Shangyi* can also be found<sup>73</sup>.

One has the impression that at the early stage the ties with the territory were not too strong. Political units constituted mainly organized social groups. But the tie between a human group and a territory doubtless occurred already then.

The pictogram "earth" (*tu*) is interpreted diversely. According to one theory it is a mound of soil from which dust is blown around by the wind<sup>74</sup>. According to other theories, it is connected with fertility cult and denoted the altar of the earth spirit which was an important structure in every community<sup>75</sup>. The settlement (*yi*) is presented symbolically by means of a settlement surrounded by a rampart and the picture of a squatting human (squat — meaning inhabit)<sup>76</sup>. The estate (*bang*)

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., s. 321 - 323; Ding Shan, o.c., p. 42 - 44.

<sup>72</sup> Significantly, still in *Shuo wen* „state” is given as the basic meaning of „yi”. *Shuo wen jie zi* (Explanation of the script and analysis of the characters), juan 6 xia, Beijing 1965, p. 131. This vocabulary was compiled in the years 100 - 121 A. D.

<sup>73</sup> Chen Mengjia, o.c., p. 325.

<sup>74</sup> Zhang Xuan, *Zhong wen changyong san qian zi xing yi shu* (The etymology of the three thousands most common characters), Xianggang 1968, p. 172 - 173.

<sup>75</sup> Guo Moro associated that pictogram with the phallic symbol. In meaning he linked it to she — the earth spirit altar. See: Guo Moro, *Jiagu wenzi yanjiu*..., p. 18. Also other scholars favoured the latter interpretation. See: *Jiagu wen bian* (Collection of oracle shell and bone characters), Zhongguo Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, Beijing 1965, p. 518. Karlgren regarded it as the presentation of the sacred phallic pole of the earth altar (B. Karlgren, *Grammata Serica*, Stockholm 1940, no 62a - c, p. 143). Hou Wailu recognized that the characters denoting „king” (*wang*), „ancestor” (*zu*) and „earth” (*tu*) are connected with the forbears cult, but did not pinpoint their original meanings (Hou Wailu deng, *Zhongguo sixiang tong shi*, *Gudai sixiang bian* — General history of Chinese thought. The ancient thought, vol. 1 Shanghai 1947, p. 63). Liang Donghan recognized this character as unyielding to interpretation. Liang Donghan, o.c., p. 172. Let us note that the ancient *Shuo wen* interpreted the character as the pictogram of a plant born of the lands (*Shuo wen*... juan 13 xia, cited ed., p. 286).

<sup>76</sup> *Jiagu wen bian*..., p. 280. 374. B. Karlgren recognized as unquestionable the presentation of the squatting man, but he regarded as probable only the presentation of upper part as the wall, rampart of a settlement (Cf: B. Karlgren, *Grammata Serica*..., no. 683 a-c, p. 301; By the same author: *Easy Lessons in Chinese Writing*, Stockholm 1958, p. 33 - 34). Hou Wailu interpreted the upper part as land and the lower one as a slave (Hou Wailu *Zhongguo gudai shehui shi lun*, Studies on the social history of ancient China, Beijing 1955, p. 151). Jin Zhaozi regarded the upper part as a settlement, the lower one — in line with the conventional interpretation — as a nominal sign. Jin Zhaozi, *Feng, yi, bang, guo, fang bian* (Treatment of the terms feng, yi, bang, guo and fang). Lishi Yanjiu 1956, no. 2, p. 82.

was initially represented by a cultivable field from which a plant grows. Later, in the Zhou period, the character was modified when the mentioned pictogram was linked with the settlement (*yi*)<sup>77</sup>.

The axe (*ge*) is simply a pictogram of this weapon<sup>78</sup>. The part (*fang*) comes most probably from the drawing depicting a stooping man, which symbolically was to denote a space beside<sup>79</sup>. But one also comes across a different interpretation: the roots of the plant buried in the ground as converse to the *bang* depicting the upper part of the plant<sup>80</sup>. The second interpretation is better in line with the meaning of the character.

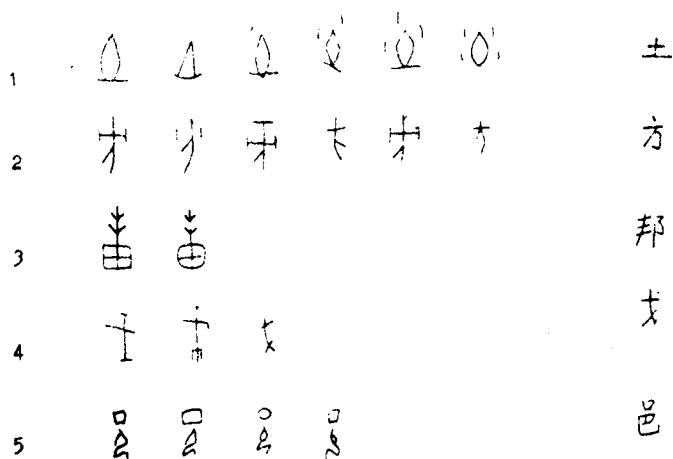


Fig. 2. The characters meaning: 1. *tu* — earth, 2. *fang* — part, 3. *bang* — estate, 4. *ge* — war-axe, 5. *yi* — settlement. The primitive forms in oracle-bone inscriptions and the present forms

The character translated as the centre (*zhong*), occurring in the compound Central Shang was not in the least confined in meaning to "middle", "interior" alone at that time. Another character (today read in the same way — *zhong*) appeared in this function. It is commonly understood that the pictogram used in Central Shang presents a military banner with strips of fabric flying in the wind<sup>81</sup>. So according to Hu

<sup>77</sup> *Jiagu wen bian*..., p. 281; Jin Zhaozi, o.c., p. 32 - 83.

<sup>78</sup> *Jiagu wen bian*..., p. 488 - 489;

Liang Donghan, o.c., p. 51.

<sup>79</sup> Zhang Xuan, o.c., p. 366.

<sup>80</sup> Jin Zhaozi, o.c., p. 88. Traditionaly, still another etymology was adopted. The character was regarded as a pictogram of a double-hull boat, a catamaran. *Shuo wen*... juan 8 xia, ed. cit., p. 176. *Zhong wen da ci dian* (Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language); vol. 21, Taipei 1973, p. 6285.

<sup>81</sup> Cf: *Jiagu wen bian*..., p. 17 - 18; Zhang Xuan, o.c., p. 12 - 13; B. Karlgren, *Grammata Serica*. no. 1007 a - e, p. 392 - 393. One should note that this character was traditionally interpreted as a symbol of harmony, concord, rightful moral way, among other meanings. See: *Zhong wen da ci dian*..., vol. II, p. 402 - 403.

Houxuan it symbolizes in fact the capital garrison and should be translated as central, main<sup>82</sup>. In this form it was still used in the Zhou period as distinct from the "middle"<sup>83</sup>.

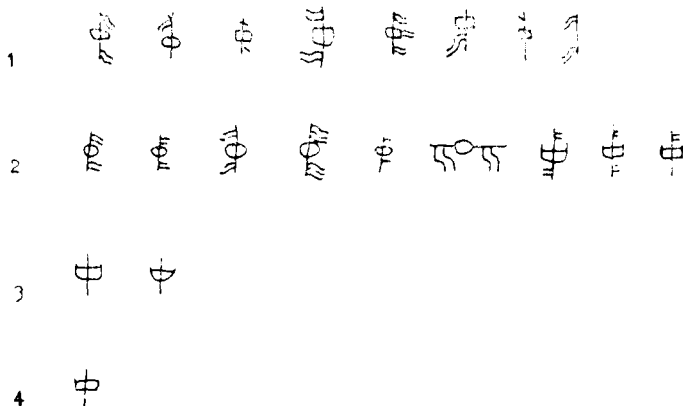


Fig. 3. The development of the character meaning central and middle — zhong.  
1. The early forms in oracle-bone inscriptions. 2. The forms in bronze inscriptions.  
3. The forms meaning only middle in bronze inscriptions. 4. The present form

This seems to question the Hu Houxuan concept according to which the Shangs knew the division of space into five parts, that is the middle and four parts of the world. The use of the term central and the delineation of the area around the capital was something different than the delineation of the four parts of the world made from the central point. Chen Mengjia maintains that the Four Parts (*sifang*) meant four lands, that is regions surrounding the capital from the East, West, South

<sup>82</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Lun wufang guannian...*, p. 387. The meaning of the character *zhong* as central, main, is also accepted by Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou...*, vol. III, p. 167a.

Hu Houxuan also voiced the view that *zhong* originally meant „banner” both as a flag and as a military unit, and, figuratively, the land, region, putting it forth. See: by the same author *Jiagu xu cun* (Preserved inscriptions on the oracle bones and shells), vol. I, Shanghai 1955, p. 5.

Ding Shan also identifies *zhong* with the army, but rather with its main grouping (Ding Shan, *o.c.*, pp. 61 - 66) Earlier he gave another theory under which he associated the *zhong* symbol with the box used at the ritual target shooting organized in the capital under the ruler's patronage. Hence the appearance of moral semantic components which the king personified. The early Shang symbol of the banner, was, according to him, a different character. See: Ding Shan, *Xing zhong yu zhongyong* (Vice as well as the middle and harmony) in: *Studies Presented to Ts'ao Yuan P'ei on His Sixty Fifth Birthday*, Peiping 1933, p. 619 - 625.

<sup>83</sup> Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou jin wen ci da xi kaosuo* (Inscriptions on bronze from the both Zhou Dynasties periods with extensive terminological explanations), Dongjing (Tokyo) 1944 vol. III, p. 167a, 202b.

and North, which were distinctly separate from the farther-lying lands, the vassal possessions. In this sense these areas could be compared with the capital area. Then at least the central part of the state would break down into five parts: the capital area and the surrounding four lands<sup>84</sup>. If, however, *sifang* was used to denote the four parts of the world, it did not imply at all any delineation of the fifth part — the capital — but the capital was only adopted to be a vantage observation point. The term Central Shang is connected with the social order, not the spatial one, and consists in forwarding Shang above the four parts of the world and not in delineating the fifth part.

Such an interpretation is distinctly supported by the text of the inscription on the bronze vessel dating from the Wuwang period (1066? - 1063? B. C.), the first ruler of the Zhou Dynasty. It says about the three parts (*sanfang*) of the Shang state. Guo Moro explains that the Zhou living westward of the former capital regarded their country as the land of the West, and therefore spoke of the remaining three Parts or Countries<sup>85</sup>. They adopted, at least at the outset, as can be seen from their spatial orientation, the old Shang concepts, and yet they spoke only about the North, South, East and West, thus dividing their oikumena and not mentioning the existence of any central district.

It is symptomatic that at first, already under Muwang (976? - 924? B. C.), the term Internal State (*nei guo*) went into use as denotation of the royal lands<sup>86</sup>, and it was much later, in the mid 1st millennium B. C. that the term Middle State (*Zhongguo*) appeared. So there is no evident continuity of the use of the same character *zhong*, not even the concept, if one bears in mind that *Zhong Shang* meant Central Shang, while *Zhongguo* meant rather Middle State. This interpretation of the latter term is supported by the fact that it was entering usage when China was divided and so it was possible to speak only of Middle States to contemporary reality, and not of a Central State. One could admit the thought that the Shang ideas to some extent inspired the thinkers who lived a few centuries later and could exert an influence on their concepts and the formation of the idea of Middle State at that time. But the latter concepts were actually formed in the last centuries B. C., not in the Shang period. So Ding Shan is right when he treats the Shang pictogram identified with the character *zhong* as separate from the concept of Middle State, the *zhong* character occurring in that name, whatever doubts can be voiced about his etymology<sup>87</sup>.

The term "state" appeared in the Shang descriptions in the elementary form close to the character today read as *yu*. This pictogram shows

<sup>84</sup> Chen Mengjia, o.c., p. 320, 325.

<sup>85</sup> Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou* . . . vol. I, p. 1a - b.

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem vol. I, p. 61b.

<sup>87</sup> Ding Shan, *Xin zhong* . . .

a settlement surrounded by ramparts and a battle-axe i.e. armed squad of defenders<sup>88</sup>. According to one interpretation this axe is not a semantic, but only a phonetic element<sup>89</sup>. This does not seem certain, however, because the battle-axe, other kinds of weapons and military banners often occur as semantic elements in social terms, and because it fits well in meaning with the contents of the character. It was rarely used in the Shang period. It was not until the reign of the Zhou Dynasty that the term began to appear in broader use denoting the state. Sometimes it was expanded by a determinative element signifying earth, territory or, more rarely, water or tree linking the term with the area, or the character "king". Later enclosing dashes — signifying frontiers — were added. Finally, the dashes began to surround the former hieroglyph on all sides<sup>90</sup>. It was in that form already that it appeared in the Muwang Period<sup>91</sup> (976? - 924? B. C.), which did not mean, however, that the earlier forms had been fully supplanted<sup>92</sup>. The linking of the state with the territory within definite boundaries is noticeable in the evolution of various terms. For instance the notions such as "my land" (*wo tu*), meaning our country, and "land enclosed within boundaries" (*jiang tu*) appeared<sup>93</sup>.

In the period of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1066? - 777 B. C) usually the term "estate" (*bang*) was used to denote the state — both the royal districts and the vassal possessions. One also comes across, all the time, the notion "Four Parts" (*sifang*) meaning the world<sup>94</sup>. One notes a fairly clear distinction between the territory of the state usually called *bang* (our state — *wo bang*, Zhou State — *Zhou bang*) and the word, four parts (*sifang*)<sup>95</sup>. It seems that not only the district run directly by the

<sup>88</sup> Zhang Xuan, o.c., p. 170 - 171; *Jiagu wen bian*..., p. 489; *Zhong wen da cidian*..., vol. VIII, p. 2882.

<sup>89</sup> Chen Mengjia, o.c., p. 321.

<sup>90</sup> Jin Zhaozi, o.c., p. 35; *Zhong wen da cidian*..., vol. VIII, p. 2882.

<sup>91</sup> Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou*..., vol. I, p. 61b.

<sup>92</sup> See: Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou*..., vol. II, p. 135a, vol. III, p. 203a.

<sup>93</sup> Ibidem, vol. I, p. 34a, 51a. The text from the Kangwang times (1026? - 1004? B. C.) says, for instance, that the preceding rulers of the dynasty had received (presumably from Heaven) the people and "bounded earth" (*jiang tu*), i.e. the territory of the state. Ibidem, p. 34.

But one should also remark that sometimes *guo* occurred in a different meaning, namely: the senior's house (maisons seigneuriales). See: L. Vandermeersch, *Wangdao ou la voie royale, Recherches sur l'esprit des institutions de la Chine archaïque*, vol. I, *Structures culturelles et structures familiales*, Paris 1977, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, p. 296. The latter meaning helps to explain one of the possible senses of the compound *guo + jia* (state + family), which would thus mean "the reigning house". The latter is not hard to identify with the state.

<sup>94</sup> See texts in: Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou*... vol. I, p. 5b, 19b, 20b, 34a, 35a, 55b, 62a, 77a, vol. II, p. 104a, 134b - 135a, 139a, 140b, 147a.

<sup>95</sup> Ibidem, vol. I, p. 33b - 35a, vol. II, p. 121a.

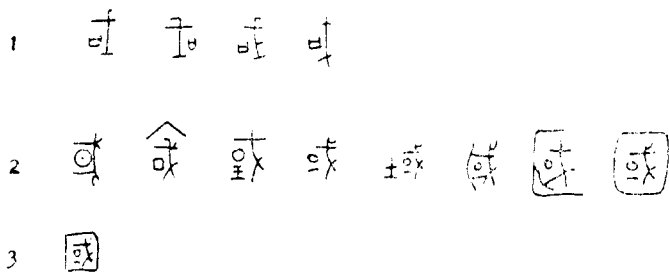


Fig. 4. The development of the character meaning state — *guo* in: 1. The early forms in oracle-bone inscriptions. 2. The forms in bronze inscriptions. 3. The present form

king, but the whole entity was described as the state<sup>96</sup>. Also in that period the combination of the state and the ruler's family (*wo bang wo jia*)<sup>97</sup> appeared, which was later transformed in the compound "state and dynasty" (*guojia*) and finally into the name „state" (*guojia*). The compound, used to this day, began to appear in this meaning already at the end of the Warring States period<sup>98</sup>.

The term "state" (*guo*) appeared in that period still comparatively rarely and rather in simpler graphic forms in the sense: country, region, district. At the same time, the term *bang* was assuming more and more precise contents which was connected with the development of state institutions. Already on the turn of the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. the close term "citizen" (*bang ren* — man of state)<sup>99</sup> was used. Later it was replaced in the same meaning by the term *guoren*.

In the period of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-403) an evident evolution in terminology began taking place. It was even speedier in the successive period of Warring States. Chen Mengjia asserts that the "parts-states" (*fang*) became juxtaposed with the Zhou State (*Zhoubang*), also defined as Royal State (*Wang guo*), Zhou estate (*you Zhou*)<sup>100</sup>. In the 5th-4th century B.C. *fang* simply began to mean "territory"<sup>101</sup>. It is just the development of statehood which appears to explain that evolution. China with its developed political structures early stood out from among the lands inhabited by various tribes. However, the term *fang* was sometimes used also to denote barbarian states<sup>102</sup>. At the end

<sup>96</sup> Ibidem, vol. II, p. 143b.

<sup>97</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>98</sup> See for example: *Mengzi* (The Book of Mencius), Juan Liang Huiwang, part. II (*Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. I, p. 88). *Shangjianshu* (The Book of Shang Yang) Juan 3 (*Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. V, p. 7).

<sup>99</sup> Guo Moro, *Liang Zhou*..., vol. II, p. 140b.

<sup>100</sup> Chen. Mengjia, o.c., p. 320.

<sup>101</sup> Cf: *Lun yu* (Analects), Xianjin II (*Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. I, p. 261).

<sup>102</sup> Cf.: *Lun yu*, 15 Weilinggong; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. I, pp. 334-335.

of the Warring States period such use of the term *fang* became increasingly rare with the character assuming other meanings: earth, place (in the compound *difang*), pattern, square. Yet still on the turn of the 5th and 4th centuries the term *fang* in the meaning "state" was used. The world continued to be frequently defined as the "four parts" (*sifang*)<sup>103</sup>. In this connection the term *fangren* — any man not linked to any definite culture or state — could appear<sup>104</sup>.

The meaning of the new term "Four States" is not wholly clear. Chen Mengjia believes that it meant "China" and that „many parts" (*duo fang*) or Four Parts (*si fang*) continued being juxtaposed to it<sup>105</sup>. Tang Lang, also recognizing the term as equivalent to China, treats it, among other things, as tantamount in meaning with *sifang*. However, he notes the instances of its use in juxtaposition to "many parts" (*siguo duofang*)<sup>106</sup>.

The appearance of the pluralist concept of China as the multitude of states of the South, North, East and West, was connected, on the one hand, with the disintegration of the country in the Spring and Autumn period. At the same time, their juxtaposition to the outside world bore witness to the formation of a new sense of cultural and historical unity. That distinction is in a way related to the distinguishing in the Shang state of the "four lands" (*situ*) in juxtaposition to the estates of the princes-warriors (four axes — *si ge*). But it signifies a new stage: the passing on to the concept of Middle States regarding themselves to be inheritors of the old civilization and thus distinct from the barbarians.

It is worth recalling that despite the disintegration of the Zhou state the rulers of that dynasty preserved for a long time some ritual and ceremonial functions. There continued to exist the state integrating institutions developed at the beginning of the Zhou empire. Later, in the Warring States period, kings-hegemony, who imposed their supremacy on others, appeared.

It has not been possible for me to define precisely when the term Middle State (or rather Middle States at that time) first appeared. It is possible to establish that only approximately. One of the relevant reasons for the difficulty is the problem of dating the classical book

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem, Yao yue 20 (Zhu zhi ji cheng, vol. I, pp. 412 - 413).

<sup>104</sup> This explanation of the term *fang ren* is only hypothetical. It appeared in Lunyu giving much trouble to the commentators. See: Lun yu, 14 Xian wen (Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. I, p. 320).

<sup>105</sup> Chen Mengjia, o.c., p. 320.

<sup>106</sup> Tang Lan, „*Si guo*" jie (The explanation of the term „Four States"), Yugong 1934, no. 10, p. 6 - 9. Also see: Shang shu, 12 Duo fang (Sibu bei yao, part III, p. 7a).

The use of the term *sifang* to denote the Chinese lands is certified, among other sources, in *Shijing* (The Book of Odes) and so it was interpreted later, too. Cf. *Ci hai* ..., p. 295.

texts. It seems sure enough that the term was used at the end of the Warring States period.

In the works believed to be earlier it also appears, but very rarely and it is not possible to establish whether it is not a later interpolation. On the other hand, in the works dating from the Warring States period it is used more often and is integral with the text at that. However it should be stressed that even in the latter period it was not yet a basic and commonly used term<sup>107</sup>. Its role grew significantly only in the first centuries of the empire.

Most evidently, it belongs to a different period, using a different language. For if one compares, for instance, the texts of two respectable canonical books written in two close periods: "Analects" (*Lun yu*) and "Book of Mencius" (*Mengzi*) one perceives big differences between them in the terminology concerning the state. The former was written in the 5th century B.C., most probably at the century's end, and was an account of the statements and activities by Confucius and his discourses with disciples. The latter, the *Book of Mencius* (377 - 289), was written probably also after the philosopher's death, not later than in the 3rd century B.C. So the time lag between them is probably about 150 years.

In the former book the fundamental term denoting "state" is "bang" (used 47 times). Guo also occurs in the same sense, but is much rarer (10 times). There is sporadic occurrence of "fang" denoting a country (but also a territory). The world is described as "everything under Heaven"

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. M. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft*..., p. 146. This term in the sense Middle States as distinct from the barbarians, occurs, for example in the Book of Mencius (*Mengzi*, Lianghuiwang I, Gaozi II, Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. I, p. 54, 506). We do not come across it at all in the Analects (*Lun yu*). In the Book of Odes (*Shijing*) it occurs thrice, but it is not always clear in which of the possible meaning. In the Book of Documents (*Shang shu*) it occurs once but the meaning is not clear enough. Some Chinese commentators interpret it as Middle State (*Shang shu*, Zi cai 13, Si bu bei yao edition, juan 8, p. 11a; Yang Shixiang, *Shang shu du ben* — The Book of Documents Manual, — prepared in Tongcheng, 1908 Baoyang Shuju, vol. II, p. 11b), Ju Wanli as Central Plane (o.c., p. 90). B. Karlgren translated it as the Central Kingdom (The Book of Documents, p. 48). J. Legge interpreted it as the Middle Kingdom with comment that it is equivalent to *zhong bang* (Middle region) in the *Tribute of Yu* (The Chinese Classics, vol. III, part 2, p. 418, cf. part 1, p. 141). The last term was used there however for denoting only a capital area under direct supervisions of a king what is the narrowest possible meaning of the Central State. Probably J. Legge was quite right, the term *zhongguo* used in the Book of Documents is connected with people and juxtaposed with the buonded territory of the state. It seems near to the old term *nei guo* — the inner state, which means Zhou kings estate. Fang Xiaoyue's interpretation treating *zhong bang* in the *Tribute of Yu* as denoting central *zhou* identified by him with *Jizhou* (o.c., p. 57-58) seems misleading. Are the nine provinces division arranged around any center? Gu Jiegang has the different opinion. The sentence in question place *fu* — duty belts in opposition to the using their services centre, but *Jizhou* have ascribed duties like others *zhou*.

(Tianxia), though sporadically "four parts" (*sifang*) also occur. In the *Book of Mencius* the basic term denoting "state" is already "guo", and the world is described as "Tianxia". The terms "bang" and "sifang" occur in quotes from earlier books. Moreover, the interpretation of the state is different. The book gives prominence to state frontiers, administrative machine, foreign policy<sup>108</sup>. One needs not even know the history of China to sense immediately that what one speaks here of is in fact a different structure than the former bang or estates of feudal princes. The terminology of *Analects* is close to the one in the *Book of Documents*, it remains within the sphere of the state concept connected with the past period.

*Analects* twice employs the term "everything between the four seas" as equivalent with Tianxia. In the *Book of Mencius* that term appears many times and it is clearly enough identified with China, with the nine provinces<sup>109</sup>. Quite often Tianxia also means actually the Chinese world, the Chinese states and is limited to more or less sinized regions. The Tianxia People (*tianxia zhi ren*, *tianxia zhi min*) functions as a concrete political term. The world, which for the people of the archaic period was large, diversified and little known, in a way had shrunk for Mengzi. What was nearer was explored, sinization obliterated the former basic differences, but no incursion had been made yet into further territories and no influence had been extended yet to the new "barbarian lands".

The use of the term *Zhongguo* is not always tantamount to Middle State (or States) in ancient texts. Initially that term also appeared in a few other functions. First of all, *zhong* often meant plains, so *Zhongguo* meant only States of the Plains<sup>110</sup>. *Zhongguo* was used interchangeably with *guozhong* to denote the capital, the state centre<sup>111</sup>. Let us note that even the term *guo* happened to be used sometimes to denote the capital, not the state<sup>112</sup>. The character *zhong*, among many other meanings, had the following major senses: right, correct not going to

<sup>108</sup> Mencius writes: "...When I first arrived at the borders of your state. I enquired about the great prohibitory regulations... (James Legge's translation), *Mengzi*, *Lianghuiwang* II; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. I, p. 64.

<sup>109</sup> *Mengzi*, *Lianghuiwang* I (*Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. I, p. 54).

<sup>110</sup> Probably it is just in this meaning that is found in the *Book of Documents* (*Shang shu*, *Zicai*; *Ju Wanli*, o.c., p. 90). Cf. also the commentary in *Guoyu*, *Jinyu di shiwu*, *Wei Shi jie* (Series: *Sibu beiyao*, Shanghai, *Zhonghua Shuju*, vol. IV, p. 1).

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Mengzi*, *Lianghuiwang* II, *Gongsong Chou* II; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. I, p. 65, 175 - 176.

Recording that mutability Hou Wailu noted that the original meaning of this term was just „central city“, „capital“, sometimes narrowed to „military garrison“. Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo gudai shehui*..., p. 191. One finds it in the latter meaning sometimes even in the texts dating back to the Warring States period.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. for example: *Lü shi chun qiu*, juan 6, *Lixia ji*, *Zhi le*; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VI, p. 63.

extremes, as well as harmony, perfectness (as the state of spirit of the individual and the society). It was a fundamental category of the Confucian philosophy. Middle Way (*zhong dao*) meant in the first place: correct way, fulfilment of the principles morally appropriate and according with Heaven<sup>113</sup>. The character "zhong" in the name Middle State meant first of all: middle, internal, central. However, its other mentioned contents created a certain emotional atmosphere. They could and, I believe, did overlap the meaning "middle". They contributed to the conviction that the state by its very nature implements Middle Way, is the carrier of moral perfectness, represents the transcendental factor of Heaven in the human world. Such identification of the two meaning groups arose from the theory of Middle State notably in the interpretation of the Confucian school which assigned to that state as its aim the fulfilment of perfect moral principles within the society through moral perfectness of the administrators. Also other ancient beliefs attributing to Middle Land (*zhong tu*) that particular, the most perfect quality (*de* or *qi*) contributed to that identification.

The appearance of the term Middle State was connected with the ideological transformations and social integration processes of national character, though seemingly it was not connected with the ethnos. The Middle State distinguished itself as opposed to the "Four Barbarian Peoples" (*si yi*) or barbarians called otherwise. It also happened that the barbarians were distinguished as opposed to *Zhongguo*. H.C. Greel appears to be right in indicating that the basis of the Chinese drive to be distinct were not ethnical, but cultural factors, the way of life, the set of accepted customs and beliefs (*li*)<sup>114</sup>. As a result, the civilized areas belonging to *Zhongguo*, not barbarian, really must have meant sinized territories. But one should bear in mind that sinization concerned only some cultural strata and did not have to entail the annihilation of vernacular traditions. It was rather their transformation which concerned chiefly the culture of the ruling strata, not the people<sup>115</sup>.

The processes of national-type integration, the separation of the group Huaxia or Zhuxia and the formation of Middle State ideology

<sup>113</sup> Cf. for example: *Lun yu*, 6 Yong ye, 11 Xianjin, 23 Yao ye; *Zhu zi cheng*, vol. I, p. 132-133, 248-411; *Lü shi chun qiu*, Meng xia ji 6, Zeng shi; *Zhu zi ji cheng*, vol. VI, p. 41. *Shang shu*, 12 Jiu gao (series: *Si bu bai yao*, part II, p. 7a).

<sup>114</sup> H. G. Creel, o.c., p. 197. While explaining the *li* category often incompletely translated as „etiquette“, he cites its perfect explanation from Zuozhuan as: „What the former kings received from Heaven and Earth, in order to govern (literally „to form“) their people“.

<sup>115</sup> For example, in the commentary to the Book of Documents when mentioning „the four kinds of barbarians“, after enumerating them in accord with the parts of the world, is given the following principle of distinguishing them: They do not have *de* (Virtues) of *junzi* (the nobleman) *Shang shu*, juan 12, Biming 26; Series: *Si bu bei yao*, part III, p. 3a.

went much ahead of the appearance of the term <sup>116</sup>. That national sense was felt, for example, in the school of Confucius who initiated the formation of State ideology of the new type, the vision of history showing the unity of divided China, glorified the person of the Son of Heaven, justified his power over the world by the mission assigned to him by Heaven, put forth the ideas of King's Way — the ideas of good and just government. Paradoxically, expressing the national ideas and contributing so much to the formation of the Chinese ethnos consciousness and culture recognized as national, that school developed the theory of what actually was a supraethnic state. In its interpretation, the society was to be held together by state and ideological bonds. While treating the culture and morality created by the Chinese, or rather proto-Chinese aristocratic strata, as of general human nature, the Confucian schools indirectly postulated sinization of the world under a universal state model, first of all, sinization of the ruling strata in the neighbour states. It is not accidental, apparently, that in its writings the term Middle State does not appear. It began to appear as late as at the end of the Warring States period in the 3rd century B.C., when the earlier-postulated sinization processes had been accomplished.

The Middle State concept is in its essence a negation of the older state organizations into belts. In the *Zhongguo* model there are, instead of ever wilder lands surrounding the not big ruler's estate, huge civilized areas treated as homogeneous with cultures different to some extent but recognized as equivalent, or almost equivalent, just the Chinese. These lands, the Middle State, are surrounded by barbarians.

In the beginning of the empire the Middle State understood again as Central State began to be identified with the *wen* factor — that is culture interpreted first of all as moral contents and rules, as the attainment of prosperity through farming and good administration, while the barbarians were identified with the *wu* factor — armed force, violence, terror and capture of goods through plunder. The former factor was the manifestation of the positive cosmic element *yang*, the former — the negative element — *yin*. These concepts were born in the Han period when the empire was in the state of armed confrontation

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<sup>116</sup> Ho Ping-ti interprets the term *Zhuxia* in a very broad manner as denoting the people, the lands and the states having common Chinese (Sinitic) heritage in religion, culture and the language. While agreeing with the widespread view that that name appeared as late as the mid 7th century B.C., he dates the distinguishing of the Chinese complex to the beginning of the Zhou period citing the terms close to *Zhuxia* used then, for example the Xia holding (*you Xia*), the Xia territories (*qu Xia*). See: Ho Ping-ti, *The Cradle of the East, An Inquiry into the Indigenous Origins of Techniques and Ideas of Neolithic and Early Historic China, 5000 - 1000 B.C.*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong 1975, pp. 287 - 288. His arguments on the latter question does not appear to be convincing enough. At the most, they attest to the beginning of such a distinguishing process.

with the nomads of the north steppe belt which was the main threat to it.

The concept of cultural supremacy of the former capital centre was transposed to the whole Middle State whose boundaries marked the dividing line between the fully civilized areas and going through these processes, and the wild areas. Hence the antinomy: Chinese-barbarian, which could not exist in the belt model, appeared <sup>117</sup>.

In the first centuries of the empire, however, the belt model was implemented to some extent. Namely, the provinces (*jun*) were divided into internal (*nei jun*) lying on the area of the former Middle States and into external (*wai jun*) created on the recently assimilated lands. In accord with the concept of non-homogeneous space, attribution to every territory of a definite quality — "spirit" (*qi*), the internal provinces were assigned the duty to name noble and talented people to perform the function of administrators, whereas the external provinces fond of strength, horsemanship and fighting, were recommended to name capable commanders. In this way the primeval division of the state into two fundamental kinds of territory: internal-administered by civilians and civilized, and external, less civilized and performing military functions, was reinstated.

One should stress, however, that this model was not strictly adhered to either in practice or theory, as it seems. Practical actions were adapted to the realities: for instance not all territories of the former Middle States were regarded as civilized, part of them being actually qualified as semibarbarian lands fond of fighting and hunting, and not of agriculture <sup>118</sup>.

But in theory the barbarians were given the credit for being able to assimilate culture: master a high-standard agricultural civilization, learn ethical contents, *li* rules, etc. In the *Book of the Han Dynasty*, in the description of such very processes occurring on the newly annexed lands, Korea among others, it is clearly stated with Confucius being referred to that ethical sciences and civilization processes do not admit the division of humans into different kinds, that is into those susceptible to education and the intractable barbarians. First of all, the time factor is accentuated in the discussion on the sinizing transforma-

<sup>117</sup> This antinomy is interestingly explained by J. L. Krol. He interprets the identification of the barbarians and offenders within China as a factor destroying the commendable order and he shows the connection between this concept and the concepts of the cycle: the period of chaos — the period of peace and flourishing growth. J. L. Krol, *O koncepcji "Kitaj — varvary"* (On the concept "China — barbarians"), in: *Kitaj, obščestvo i gosudarstvo*, Moskva 1973, p. 13 - 29.

<sup>118</sup> Such lands were to be found on the area of former states: Zhao, Qi, Wei and Chu. *Han shu bu zhu* (History of the Han Dynasty with comments). *Dilizhi* (Description of the lands), part 8, xia, 2; *Han shu bu zhu* (*Wang Xianqian bu zhu*). Series: *Guoxue jiben congshu*, Shanghai 1959, vol. IV, p. 3035.

tion<sup>119</sup>. The sinocentric views predominant in the Han period should not be treated as a cohesive and generally accepted complex. In the above-mentioned *Book of the Han Dynasty* its author Ban Gu (32 - 92 A. D.) does not spare disfavoured evaluations when he speaks of the former royal estate population's inclination to frauds, pursuit of advantages and contempt of virtues. On the other hand, he writes that virtues were in full bloom among the people inhabiting the Tianshui region performing military duties which lay near the northern frontier where, he writes, there were many forests and mountains, few people, where pastoral life and hunting predominated, where strength and not culture was valued. There, he writes, virtues flourished, harmony and concord reigned among people and administrators loved one another and there were almost no brigands nor thieves<sup>120</sup>. So it turned out that the military territories close to the Di barbarians represented a much higher moral standard than the central lands, which was a flagrant contradiction of the Middle State model. While recognizing the existence of sinocentric concepts in the empire, one must not regard this views as absolutely predominant.

So Middle State was in reality a new political model which differed both from the Nine Districts and the organization of the Cosmos in the form of *fu* belts. It was born in effect of protracted evolution. Yet the old traditions and concepts exerted a large influence both on the ideology and political practice of Middle State.

The view, widespread among the Chinese historians, that the Middle Country concept derives directly from the pre-history of civilization, the beliefs of primitive tribes that only spirits and monsters live outside their own world or from the primeval distinction of five parts of the world<sup>121</sup> — fails to find confirmation. The process during which the concept of Middle State had shaped, was immeasurably more complicated, while the very ideological complex and name are comparatively late.

The interpretation of Middle State as an internally fairly homogeneous territory occurs in Chinese thinking in two versions. The first of them shows, beyond China, vast spaces, hundreds or even thousands of states, some of which are even more perfect or outright fabulous. The other identifies the world with Middle State, assuming that *Zhongguo* divided into nine provinces (or into individual states) was surrounded by seas on all sides. It is just because of this that from ancient times both the term "Land" — "Everything between the Four Seas" (*Si hai zhi nei, si hai*) and the term "Earth" — "Everything under Heaven" (*Tian*

<sup>119</sup> Ibidem, p. 3020.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem, p. 3020 - 3022, 3028.

<sup>121</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Wu fang guannian...*; Yang Xianggui, *Zhongguo gudai shehui yu sixiang yanjiu* (Studies on the ancient Chinese society and the ancient thought), Shanghai 1962, vol. I, p. 141 - 144.

*xia*) were often treated as synonymous with *Zhongguo*. One comes across the latter interpretation already in Mencius<sup>122</sup>. The Middle States are often so interpreted in the Plans of Warring States (*Zhan guo ce*)<sup>123</sup>. This previous standpoint occurs in the Spring and Autumn Annals of Lǔ (*Lu shi chun qiu*)<sup>124</sup>, in the Book of prince Huainan (*Huainanzi*)<sup>125</sup> and in a way also the old Book on Mountains and Seas (*Shan hai jing*) can be included in this tradition. It is symptomatic that depending on the assumed concept different dimensions of the Land (*si hai zhi nei*) are given. Mencius cites one thousand li from the North to the South and so many from the East to the West<sup>126</sup>. The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lǔ give the first dimension as 26,000 li, the second as 28,000 li<sup>127</sup>. The Book of prince Huainan repeats the latter, but also gives another measurement of Earth made on the order of Yu the Great: 33,500 li and 75 steps from South to North and from East to West each<sup>128</sup>. Let us add that the Book of the Han Dynasty (*Han shu*), the work dating back to the end of the first century A.D., gives the following dimensions of the empire: From East to West — 9,302 li, from North to South — 13,368 li<sup>129</sup>.

The identification of Middle State with Earth (*Tianxia*) or Land (*si hai zhi nei*) occurred either by means of reduction of non-Chinese areas or by means of considerable extension of the term *Zhongguo* to encompass by it the whole world known better or worse to the Chinese. As a result the term *Zhongguo* was applied very diversely, not univocally. Although any generalizations are always not fully true and it is possible to find many facts denying them, it appears, however, that the predomi-

<sup>122</sup> Mengzi, Lianghuiwang I; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. I, p. 54.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. *Zhan guo ce* (Warring States plans), juan 3, (*Qin guo ce*), juan 20 (*Zhao guo ce*); *Zhan guo ce*, Gao Xiu zhu, Shanghai 1958, Series: Guoxue jiben congshu, Zhonghua Shuju, part I, p. 16 - 17, part II, p. 67.

<sup>124</sup> *Lǔ shi chun qiu*, juan 13, You shi lan; juan 22, Shen xing lun; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VI, pp. 124 - 125, 292 - 293.

<sup>125</sup> *Huainanzi*, juan 4 Di xing; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VII, p. 55 - 67.

<sup>126</sup> Mengzi, Lianghuiwang I; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. I, p. 54.

<sup>127</sup> *Lǔ shi chun qiu*, juan 13, You shi lan; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VI, p. 126.

<sup>128</sup> *Huainanzi*, juan 4 Di xing; Zhu zi ji cheng, vol. VII, p. 56. These differences in the calculated size of the world were interpreted by Gu Jiegang simply as the results of rapidly expanding geographical horizons. Cf. his, *Qin Han tong yi*..., p. 2 - 8. In many cases, however, more important was a way to understand "the world". This problem was quite well pointed out by Fang Xiaoyue (o.c., p. 58).

<sup>129</sup> *Han shu bu zhu*, o.c., p. 3015. One li under the Earlier Han Dynasty (until 81 A.D.) amounted to 417.72 m. In the Zhou period until its end and in some states of the Warring States period, the li of 358.38 m was used. In Qin where *Lǔ shi chun qiu* was written, one li amounted to 497.70 m.

Counted on the basis: Yang Kuan, *Zhongguo lidai zhidu kao* (Studies on measures in the history of China), Shanghai 1955, p. 39, Wu Chengluo, *Zhongguo duliang heng shi* (History of the Chinese measures of length, weights and volume), Shanghai 1957, p. 54.

nant trend in the imperial period was identification of *Zhongguo* and *Tianxia* through the reduction of non-Chinese lands. When one reads the political-philosophical or even belles-lettres of that period, one finds that the territory of the empire, Middle State, was actually called Earth (*Tianxia*). This occurs, for example, very evidently in the well-known epic *The Tales of Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*), at the very outset of the narration in the fragment presenting popular historiosophical views.

Let us also note that from the moment of its appearance the term *Zhongguo* denoted actually a huge, political and ethnically pluralistic macrostructure. At the beginning the states regarding themselves as inheritors of the Zhou Dynasty Culture were called so. Later the empire encompassed lands of varying political status and various tribes that went through gradual sinization. The barbarians were "on the outside", but also "inside". In practice, the *Zhongguo* boundaries were only partly the boundaries of culture. Mainly they were of the administrative and military character.

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It follows clearly from the analysis of the ancient texts that, like in other matters, the attitude to the barbarians and the interpretation of the Middle State were diverse and that the early Confucianism until the 3rd cent. B.C. was far from the sinocentric concepts that dominated in the imperial period. It appears that the name *Zhongguo* is posterior to the elementary notions of the middle, central state, or the political and religious order built around the centre. Initially this term also carried different meanings. It was not until the last centuries B.C. that the concepts of the central cosmological state and name *Zhongguo* developed and incorporated philosophical and historiosophical components. The main element in the contents of the variously interpreted *Zhongguo* concepts from the Shang period until the empire was the centrality rather, not the location in the middle of the oikumena interpreted as a geographical object. It was first of all a central area fixed relatively with a reference to the social-civilizational structures, to the peoples having alien cultures and called barbarians.

(translated by Bohdan Ambroziewicz)