

The Yellow Emperor Culture and the Yellow River Culture

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Abstract: As long as we have a thorough understanding of the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture, we can grasp the mainstream essence, root and excellence of the traditional Chinese cultures. Thus we will have a better understanding of the history and reality of the Chinese nation and that of Henan Province. We will be able to better inherit and carry forward the fine traditional Chinese cultures, and better construct and promote cultural prosperity with Chinese characteristics, so as to benefit the Chinese people, influence international society and advance cultural progress.

Keywords: Yellow Emperor; Yellow River; Culture

1. The connotation and value of the Yellow Emperor culture

Culture is the sum of the material and spiritual wealth created by human beings. The Yellow Emperor culture can be thought of as the sum of the material and spiritual wealth created by the Yellow Emperor and his people in the times of the Yellow Emperor and the Five Lords. Material and spiritual wealth is a broad concept with a wide range of meanings; from remaking nature and society, reform of the practices and outcomes of human beings, and development and changes in fields such as politics, economics, ecology, military affairs, ideology, culture, science and technology and education to the creative activities and harvests of emperors, leaders and the people. The times of the Yellow Emperor

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and his family "Five Lords" lasted nearly 800 years. No wonder the Yellow Emperor culture is so rich in meaning.

1.1 Examine closely the Yellow Emperor culture from the perspective of archaeological culture

The Yellow Emperor and the "Five Lords" lived about 5,000 years ago, at the end of the Neolithic Age in the period of the Yangshao culture. With the cooperation of Chinese archaeological experts, the famous Swedish archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson excavated and studied the Neolithic site in Yangshao Village of Sanmenxia City, Henan Province. The Yellow Emperor culture is named after that. Since then, dozens of Yangshao cultural sites have been found in and around Henan Province. The Yangshao culture dates back 5,000 to 7,000 years and has again proved that in our country there existed a developed Neolithic culture before the slave society. It is one of the brilliant first rays of the morning sun in Chinese civilization. It indicates that in the transformation from primitive to slave society, there were changes in Chinese society ranging from social production, ideology and culture, to people's lives, social structure and science and education. The Chinese society stepped into a new realm and reached new heights in terms of development. It created necessary conditions and laid a solid foundation for social transformation and development with a promising future; like improvements of production tools and people's living conditions, development of agriculture and husbandry, ideological and cultural creation, scientific and technological inventions, public education, and social structural evolution. All of these created for us the solid footprints of social civilization progress. The period of the Yangshao culture is the active period of activities of the Yellow Emperor and his family

in the areas now known as Henan, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Hebei, Gansu and others. The Yellow Emperor was born in Youxiong, where he founded the tribe and which he made his capital city. There are still many remains and many legends of the Yellow Emperor in places throughout Henan Province. The "Hill of Xuanyuan" (another name of the Yellow Emperor), where he was born, is located in Beiguan of Xinzheng City. Juci Mountain, which witnessed the perennial activities of the Yellow Emperor, lies in the west of Xinzheng City. Many rock paintings and stone inscriptions were found there. The "Tomb of Shaodian" (father of the Yellow Emperor, a surname) is there. Xinmi in Henan Province is the place where the Yellow Emperor stationed and trained his troops. He built a sacrificial alter and sank a jasper to the bottom of the Yellow River in Gongyi, also in Henan Province. He cast a tripod *ding* (an ancient cooking vessel with two loop handles and three or four legs) and became immortal in LingbaoZhuding Yuan, also in Henan Province, where a record of it was inscribed in a stone tablet with the inscription on the casting, "Tripod *Ding* by the Yellow Emperor in the 17th year of Zhenyuan of the Tang Dynasty." The Yellow Emperor defeated the Yan Emperor, captured Chi You, established alliance and unified the Central Plains. After he was crowned Emperor, he occupied such a vast territory that it reached the ocean in the east, Gansu Province in the west, Inner Mongolia in the north, and the Yangtze River in the south. These became the ruled areas with activities of the Yellow Emperor and his family. The main places of residence and the scope of activities of the Yellow Emperor and his family are consistent with the archaeologically determined formation and distribution of the Yangshao culture. In this sense, the Yellow Emperor culture is Yangshao culture in nature. More accurately, it is the core, the representative and the main part of

Yangshao culture.

1.2 Examine closely the Yellow Emperor culture from the perspective of ideological culture

The Yellow Emperor culture is an exotic flower of Chinese ancient culture, a dawn of Chinese civilization, the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and an important power to promote China's cultural development and social progress. As the original creative national culture of the Chinese nation, it has a profound connotation, a deep foundation, distinctive characteristics, and broad impact, reflected mainly in the historical literature like *Records of the Historian*, *Huang Di Si Jing* and *Huang Di Nei Jing*, as well as folk tales. The Yellow Emperor culture has a great deal of spiritual content in areas like ideology, politics, military affairs, culture, morality, rule of law, faith, religion, science and technology, and education. There are thoughts and assertions, and practices and achievements in the Yellow Emperor culture, which are the sums of the spiritual wealth of the times of the Yellow Emperor. His realm of thoughts was recorded in his work, "Revere the Heaven, Love the Earth and Concern the People" (refer to *Huang Di Si Jing Li Ming*). His political assertions and governing practices were reflected in "verified a tally (used in ancient times as credentials or a warrant) with the tribes in Fushan", and "Set up left and right Da Jian (name of an official position) to monitor them. All the tribes paid allegiance to him..." He "drilled the soldiers to go on a punitive expedition against the tribes that refused to present tributes", and "exercised benevolent ruling and renovated the troops". His military thoughts and actions were reflected in "Defeating the Yan Emperor and capturing Chi You" (refer to *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords*). His cultural creations included

Chinese characters, paintings and melodies (refer to *Shi Ben · Zuo*, *Guan Zi · Wu Xing*, etc.). His practice was of humanity, justice and virtue "Run the tribe with great virtue and benevolence" (*Han Shi WaiZhuan*, vol. 8). His idea of ruling by law, "Laws are formulated by natural laws, and used for distinguishing right from wrong, and upholding justice." (refer to *Huang Di Si Jing · Jing Fa*). His lofty mission regarding consciousness, "I am endowed with good moral integrity by the Heaven, crowned Emperor by the Earth and make achievements with great support of the people." (refer to *Huang Di Si Jing · Li Ming*). He sowed seeds for crops, domesticated birds and beasts, created a calendar and a Zhi Nan Che (an ancient Chinese vehicle with a calendar figure always pointing to the south), made garments, built houses, and attached great importance to enlightening people through education (refer to *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords*, etc.). The Yellow Emperor and his family guided the ordinary people in the creation of huge spiritual and cultural wealth, which was considered so brilliant that their fame spread throughout the land and they were crowned with eternal glory in history. Because of their role in initiating the beginnings of Chinese civilization, they have become an important part of the precious cultural heritage of the Chinese nation.

The core values of the Yellow Emperor.

By chewing carefully the spirits of the Yellow Emperor culture, we can taste its core value, including innovation, people concern, virtue worship, diligence and frugality, and the pursuit of peace. The core and essence of the Yellow Emperor culture is reflected in five aspects. Specifically, the Yellow Emperor culture contains the following five spirits.

First is the spirit of innovation and pioneering. The times of the Yellow Emperor, were the end



the Yellow Emperor

of primitive society. With the development of productivity, changes in social structure and growth in population the distribution of material and culture was extremely out of balance. We can say that innovations and changes were urgently needed. Aware of these needs, the Yellow Emperor and his family, in the pioneering and innovative spirit, remade the nature, transformed the society and reformed the human being, so as to advance the development of productivity and the progress of society and shorten the time and distance of transfer from savage times to civilized times. They "sowed seeds of crops and plants according to seasons, and domesticated birds and beasts and raised silkworms." They invented new agricultural implements to promote agricultural production. They made garments, built houses and encouraged eating cooked food to improve people's health. They manufactured vehicles, boats, built bridges

for transport convenience. They observed the heavenly bodies, studied the terrain, devised a calendar to pursue natural laws, created Chinese characters, painting pictures, composed melodies, and made musical instruments to encourage civilization. They established armies, prepared weapons and set up military camps to strengthen the armed forces. They founded tribes, built cities and towns, and appointed officials to manage the regime. All of these unprecedented things arose as new phenomena on the vast wild land of China through their arduous exploration and brave practice. The development of productivity, improvement of people's living conditions and progress in society were advanced vigorously. The pioneering and innovation spirit flashed in the Yellow Emperor culture.

Second, it has a people-oriented spirit. In *Huang Di Si Jing · Shiliu Jing*, there is a saying of the Yellow Emperor, "I revere the Heaven, love the Earth and concern the people. In my Heaven bestowed destiny, I behave myself, sticking to natural laws and credibility and integrity. I revere the Heaven, so it blesses me. I love the Earth, so it is not left uncultivated. I concern my people, so they will not be starved and exhausted to death. Due to all of these, my regime will not be overthrown. Should I love my relatives, and put the outstanding and worthy people in important positions and dismiss the not worthy ones, I would come to success without regret." It fully reflects the people-oriented governance concept of the Yellow Emperor and shows his people-concerned thoughts and feelings. With such concepts, thoughts and feelings, "When the Divine Husbandman became weak in military force, his surrendered tribes started to attack each other and treated the ordinary people cruelly, however, he was unable to send punitive expeditions against the tribes," the Yellow Emperor resolutely "drilled

his troops, and sent armed forces to suppress the tribes. As a result, all the tribes surrendered to the Yellow Emperor". When "The Yan Emperor intended to attack other tribes", the Yellow Emperor "exercised benevolent ruling and renovated the troops, studied the changes of the four seasons, planted a variety of crops, reassured and pacified the people, and measured lands. He raised and trained beasts of prey such as bears and tigers, and fought with the Yan Emperor several times on the outskirts of Banquan and defeated him finally. Chi You launched a rebellion and refused to accept orders from the Yellow Emperor. Consequently, the Yellow Emperor called up the forces of other tribes and fought a war against him on the outskirts of Zhuolu, and eventually captured and killed him," to avert tyranny and disaster of wars for the ordinary people. Because of such concepts, thoughts and feelings, the Yellow Emperor set about the reform and development of people's basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter and means of transportation. He educated and enlightened the ordinary people, passed on production and life knowledge, built up consciousness of virtue and benevolence, and improved their production and living capabilities and the ideological and ethical standards. He passed on the people-oriented thought to his grandchildren, especially Zhuanxu, Diku, Di Yao and Yushun, who made great efforts in concerning the people and improving their living conditions during their reigns. They were admired and supported by their people, and records can be found in many document literature. The people-oriented spirit demonstrates the great contributions of the Yellow Emperor culture.

Third, it worships virtue and morality. The Yellow Emperor was "born with intelligence". It is said that when he learned that the Divine Husbandman did not govern by virtue, he

expressed that he would make changes in the political reign," At the age of ten, the Yellow Emperor was determined to reform the governance method of the Divine Husbandman, who did not rule by virtue." (refer to *Yu Zi*). He took the position of tribal leader after he grew into an adult and went to Emei Mountain and asked "Tian Huang Zhen Ren" about the art of governance. He was told, to better govern the world, one must "cultivate your moral characters first", and "Trust is rooted from good faith, people are convinced when great trust, justice and morality are practiced among the people, and social interests are secured by justice and morality." The Yellow Emperor was in favor of this belief and never broke it in his lifetime. According to records in literature and folk legends, he cultivated himself through virtue and swept before his own door; meanwhile, he treated his people with benevolence all his life. He was in pursuit of ruling by virtue. As a result, his state, You Xiong, was harmonious and prosperous, and eventually he "exercised benevolent ruling and renovated the troops", defeated the Yan Emperor and captured and killed Chi You, reassured and pacified the people, formed alliances with other tribes, unified the central plains, conquered the world, and leaders of other tribes declared allegiance to him (refer to *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords*). After the Yellow Emperor was crowned, he practiced ruling favorable for the ordinary people, in the pursuit of virtue and benevolence, and peace reigned over his land." (refer to *Han Shi Wai Zhuan · Vol. 8*). Eventually, the state was governed in good order. Besides the Yellow Emperor himself, the other important members of his family practiced in the same way. The Emperor Zhuan Xu," Formulated rite and morality according to ghosts and gods, straightened four seasons and five elements of

metal, wood, water, fire and earth for people's education and enlightenment, and cleaned body and mind to offer sacrifices to ghosts and gods." The Emperor Di Ku," Complied with the order of the god, understand the needs of the people, benevolent and dignified, mild and trustworthy, self-cultivated, therefore, other tribes came over and pledged allegiance." As for the Emperor Yao," His virtue and benevolence was as great as the Heaven and his intelligence was as the god; he was as warm as the sun when people got closer and as clouds hanging over the land when people looked up to." When he passed away," The people were so grieved as if their parents passed away." The Emperor Yu Shun was," Well known for his filial behaviors at the age of twenty." Although his father was fierce and his younger brother (born of the same father but of a different mother) was bad, he "still showed filial respect to his father and was kind to his younger brother." The lady with the surname Gaoxin had eight nice sons, who were called "Ba Yuan" by people. The Emperor Shun appointed their later generations as officials and asked them to develop the five moral principles everywhere in the state. As a result, in his society, fathers were righteous, mothers were affectionate, elder brothers were kind, younger brothers were respectful. Each family was harmonious and the society as a whole was peaceful (refer to *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords*). We can see that the family education and tradition of the Yellow Emperor is exemplary. His family trait of worshiping, behaving and enhancing virtue was carried on from generation to generation. This is fully embodied in *Huang Di Si Jing · Dao Fa*. The Yellow Emperor believed that "natural law" was the highest state and it created and dominated everything, sacred and inviolable. All the people were equal before natural law and nobody can go against it." Laws are formulated for social interests,

and used for distinguishing right from wrong and upholding justice." "At the moment one's fame is established, whether it be upright or evil." (refer to *Huang Di Si Jing · Jing Fa*). He emphasized that social laws were generated from natural laws, so nobody could escape the rule of law. He attached more importance to "heavenly law", believing that all the thoughts and activities of humans should be subject to the ruling and domination of the laws of Heaven and Earth, namely," the Heaven dominated social governance." So he said "I am endowed with good moral integrity by the Heaven, crowned Emperor by the Earth and make achievements with great support of the people." (refer to *Huang Di Si Jing · Shiliu Jing*) and stressed that," Those who behave according to the natural law will survive, while those who behave against it will be destroyed. As long as we comply with it, we will not lose our living environment." (refer to *Huang Di Si Jing · Jing Fa*). The worship of virtue and morality is an important reflection of the Yellow Emperor culture.

Fourth, it is the spirit of diligence and frugality. It is summarized," He worked hard both physically and mentally and saved various resources like water, fire, woods, etc." (In *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords* by Sima Qian.) His "hard-working both physically and mentally" is revealed in his governance." When the Divine Husbandman became weak in military force, his surrendered tribes started to attack each other and treat the ordinary people cruelly," the Yellow Emperor," ...drilled his troops, and send armed forces to suppress the tribes. As a result, all the tribes surrendered to him." When "The Yan Emperor intended to attack other tribes" , the Yellow Emperor "exercised benevolent ruling and renovated the troops, studied the changes of the four seasons, planted a variety of crops, reassured

and pacified the people, and measured lands. he fought with the Yan Emperor several times on the outskirts of Banquan and defeated him finally. Chi You launched a rebellion and refused to accept orders from the Yellow Emperor. The Yellow Emperor called up the forces of other tribes and fought a war with him on the outskirts of Zhuolu, and eventually captured and killed him." In addition," He sent punitive expedition against those tribes who did not pledge allegiance, and left after the rebellion was put down." In order to maintain peace between tribes he," ...verified a tally (used in ancient times as credentials or a warrant) with the tribes in Fushan." He formed alliances with other tribes and unified the central plains. To ensure lasting political stability he," kept moving forward and did not have a fixed residence with soldiers as camp guards," all the year round. Meanwhile, he set up officials for management of state affairs." All the official positions were named after clouds, and his army was called cloud troop." He "set up left and right Da Jian to monitor other tribes. Since there were harmonious relations between tribes, he held grand ceremony of worship of the Heaven and the Earth to extend gratitude for peace and prosperity." He "appointed four outstanding worthy talents for governance", to develop production, to improve people's living conditions, he "sowed seeds of crops and plants according to seasons, and domesticated birds and beasts and raised silkworms, observed and measured the sun, the moon and the stars to determine the calendar, and collected gold, jade and stones for civil use." (refer to *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords*). Therefore, the evaluation by Sima Qian," He worked hard both physically and mentally" was not an exaggeration at all. As for," he saved various resources like water, fire, woods, etc. ," there was no specific example mentioned in *Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords* by Sima Qian,

however, there are many legends like the water pits in northern Shaanxi. It is said that it used to be difficult to get drinking water and domestic water for the people living on the northern Shaanxi plateau. At high altitude, the rainwater flowed away despite heavy rain. After the rain, there was still no water for drinking or residential use. The Yellow Emperor learned of this issue on a tour of inspection and asked his official Bo Yi to tackle this problem. Bo Yi was required to try every means to retain the precious rainwater within three months at maximum. He worked out a solution to dig in the ground; however, the rainwater in the pits disappeared immediately. It turned out to be the problem of soil quality, so the stored rainwater leaked easily. At last, he mixed loess with sticky clay to make mud and had it affixed to the walls of the pit. In this way, the rainwater remained there and did not leak and the people had daily access to water. The Yellow Emperor and his succeeding generations carried on his tradition of "diligence and frugality." The Emperor Di Ku "...made full and economical use of products out of the land." The Emperor Yao "...wore yellow hat and black clothes, sat in a vermilion cart harnessed to a white horse." His children and grandchildren, however, maintained frugality after they took the throne.

Fifth, it is the spirit of creating a harmonious and integrated world. It is focused on the Chinese character "He" ("和" harmony). They advocated that family members should live happily together, subjects should be obedient to their monarch, tribes should live in harmony and the state should live in concord with neighboring states, people should follow natural laws and domestic peace should be realized. It is an overall "harmony" and the real spirit of "creating a harmonious world". He "reassured and pacified the people, and measure lands." "He sent punitive expedition against those tribes who did not pledge allegiance, and left after

the rebellion was put down". He "verified a tally (used in ancient times as credentials or a warrant) with the tribes in Fushan", and formed alliance with the tribes of the Yan Emperor and Chi You. This was before the Yan Emperor withdrew allegiance to the Yellow Emperor. He "set up left and right Da Jian to monitor other tribes. Since there were harmonious relations between tribes, he held grand ceremony of worship of the Heaven and the Earth to extend gratitude for peace and prosperity." He "acted according to natural laws and the changes of *yin* and *yang* (the two opposing principles in nature, the former feminine and negative and the latter masculine and positive)" (all above refer to Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords). He formulated and promoted, "The code of ethics between the monarch and his subjects and between the upper and the lower, manners and proprieties between father and son and between brothers, and the principles of marriage," so as to realize obedience and harmony (Shang Jun Shu · Hua Ce). He believed that "Things turn into the opposites when they reach the extreme, prosperity starts to decline when it reaches its extreme, which is the common law of nature and human society." (refer to Huang Di Si Jing · Jing Fa). It means that human development should comply with the natural laws. Therefore, the law of the Heaven and the Earth is that of human beings, namely integration of and harmony between nature and humans. The Yellow Emperor's spirit of creating a harmonious and integrated world also had impact over his succeeding generations. The Emperor Yao "carried forward noble morality and tribes were united and on intimate terms; clarified the responsibilities of officials, recognized them for their outstanding achievements, so that relations between all the tribes were harmonious." (refer to Records of the Historian · Records of the Five Lords). After

Shun's mother passed away, his father married again and fathered another son, Shun's younger brother. His father favored the younger one and tried to kill Shun several times. Shun had no other choice but to escape from home. But after he returned home, he still respectfully served his father and was friendly to his younger brother." After Shun ascended the throne as the Son of Heaven, he still "called on his father respectfully, and granted the title of a lord and territories to Xiang, his younger brother." His affection to his family members and filial obedience to his parents was preserved from generation to generation. According to the calculation of the Yellow Emperor's calendar, the era of Five Lords lasted 790 years including the Yellow Emperor's reign of 75 years. It was a long and unprecedented peaceful time, which signified the significance of the spirit of creating a harmonious and integrated world in the Yellow Emperor culture.

According to relevant statements of the International Yanhuang Culture & Research Association, I have made elaboration and supplementary explanations above for the core values of the Yellow Emperor culture. I believe these five spirits reflect the essence and core values of the culture.

2. The connotation and value of the Yellow River culture

The generation and development of human culture and the creation and progress of human civilization always have a close relationship with water. All the living objects including humans are nurtured by water. Humans "prefer living environment with water" for both water and biological resources, as they are indispensable for survival. Water refers to the big river and becomes the cradle of culture and civilization. As a result, to extend gratitude, people name these cultures and

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civilizations after the rivers nearby." The Yellow River culture" and "the Yellow River civilization" were created by the ancient Chinese people living in the Yellow River Basin. The content of the Yellow River culture is old and rich; moreover, the Yellow River itself is the mother river of the Chinese nation. The culture generated and developed in the Yellow River basin has played a significant role in the formation and development of the Chinese nation.

2.1 Examine closely the Yellow River culture from the perspective of archaeological culture

After nearly one hundred years of field archaeological studies it was discovered that the Yellow River culture gradually formed in the late Neolithic Age. Archaeologically speaking, the forming of the culture is closely related to four other types of ancient cultures; the Yangshao culture, the Qijia culture, the Longshan culture and the Dawenkou culture. From the geographical point of view, the Qijia culture is mainly distributed in the upper reaches of the Yellow River, the Yangshao culture is mainly distributed in the area of the middle

and upper reaches of the Yellow River, and the Longshan culture is mainly distributed in the lower and middle reaches of the Yellow River, while the Dawenkou culture is mainly distributed in the lower reaches of the Yellow River. Although all four cultures belong to the Yellow River culture, they differ from each other due to different geologies, climates, production and living conditions. In terms of population density, cultural prosperity and economic, political and social development, the Yangshao and Longshan cultures are the main body of the Yellow River culture. Moreover, the Yangshao culture is the root of the Yellow River culture and takes the leading role in the latter's development. Therefore, this paper focuses on the Yangshao and Longshan cultures.

The Yangshao culture, dating back 5,000 to 7,000 years, was discovered by Swedish archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson in 1921 and was named after the cultural relics found in Yangshao village, Minchi County of Henan Province. It is a symbolic culture which arose in the upper and middle reaches of the Yellow River in the late Neolithic age and was the dominant culture for

approximately two thousand years. Geologically, it reaches Gansu and Qinghai to the west, the Hanjiang River to the south, eastern Henan to the east, and southern Hebei to the north. The central area covers today's central Shaanxi plain, southern Shanxi, western and northern Henan and southern Hebei. The Yangshao culture is rare in the world in terms of the broad distribution, rich content, far-reaching impact and long time span. There was great economic development during the period of the Yangshao culture. There was a significant increase of stone tools in type and quantity, particularly some new type tools adapted to production needs, namely the stone axe used for felling trees and reclaiming waste land. In terms of crops, sorghum was found along with millet and rice. The scale of animal husbandry grew substantially and livestock included pigs, dogs, chickens, cattle and sheep. The handicraft industry developed with a pottery industry as the major symbol. In addition to instruments used for practical production, painted pottery (integration of practical production with sacrifice and decoration) was produced which reflects people's changing aesthetic tastes. In order to satisfy the needs of development of textiles and people's daily necessities, there arose a variety of ceramic and stone spinning wheels and spicule. Because of these advancements, the Yangshao culture is richer

and more colorful than the Peiligang culture. There were more potteries. During this period, with the development of pottery technology and the changes in people's need for pottery, there were new developments in the modeling and painting arts for pottery. People decorated pottery with various patterns with various artistic techniques. Such patterns included images like flowers and plants, insects, fish, sun and moon, stars, clouds, and waves. All the unearthed pottery not only reflected the distinctive artistic style of the early stage of people's painting, but the highest level of Chinese prehistoric painted pottery art creation. Meanwhile, there were new pursuits in people's spiritual world, mainly reflected in the totem worship and witchcraft beliefs, such as patterns in the pottery like birds, frogs, house lizards, and flowers, indicating people's new spiritual pursuits. Particularly, in a tomb excavated in the Xishuiipo Relics of Puyang, Henan Province, a pattern of a dragon and a tiger by clam shells was discovered buried with the owner of the tomb. The "first Chinese dragon" is a powerful proof of people's totem worship at that time and China's thousands of years of dragon culture. Additionally, many irregular olive shaped original pottery xun (an ancient egg-shape, holed wind instrument) were unearthed in several relics of Yangshao culture. They can still play pentatonic music. It can be



In order to satisfy the needs of development of textiles and people's daily necessities, there arose a variety of ceramic and stone spinning wheels and spicule.

seen that people at that time had new means of entertainment. It was also discovered from the unearthed cultural relics that there were buds of natural sciences like mathematics, physics, biology, an astronomical calendar, and medicine. There is also evidence of a transition from a matriarchal clan society to a patriarchal one and also the transition from a nomad lifestyle to the building of settlements in the valley plains. There were a variety of living structures, not only single-room houses but also conjoined-room houses. The houses were supported by wooden posts and beams. Reeds mixed with grass and mud were used for the construction of walls and roofs. This was a big revolution in China's prehistory of house construction.

The Longshan culture developed a little bit later than the Yangshao culture, and dates back about 4,000 years or so. It is named after the Longshanzhen Relics of Zhangqiu in Shandong Province. It was distributed in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, including most areas of what is now Shandong and Henan, and was a major part of the Yellow River culture. The Longshan culture generally refers to the cultural relics in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River from the late Neolithic period to the bronze period. By comparison, the Henan Longshan culture specifically refers to the over 4,000 relics of Longshan culture within the territory of Henan. Compared to the Yangshao culture period, there was new economic development during the Longshan culture period; especially in the handicraft industry which witnessed unprecedented increases and advancements in pottery and metallurgy. Fast wheel making technology was created and new molding technology was adopted in ceramic production; pottery firing was improved through the use of vertical cave kiln which increased the

height of kilns and firing temperatures for an enhanced hardness and toughness. Coupled with the use of the carburizing process, much of the pottery made was shiny black and transparent. Bronze was discovered in some of the relic sites of the Longshan culture in Henan. Fragments of the broken bronze ware or bronze slag left from the process of bronze smelting. These bronze relics, the smelting of alloy bronze, indicate the eve of the Bronze Age. During the Longshan culture period, there was a new style in the construction of cities throughout the area. At least ten cities built about 4,000-4,600 years ago have been discovered in Henan alone. These new-type cities had walls, gates and deep moats, as well as large-scale rammed earth construction bases, indicating there were residential groups and palace style buildings in the cities. Take the Wangchenggang Relics for example, located at the intersection of the Wudu River and the Ying River of Gaocheng Town, Dengfeng City, it was probably the City of the Emperor Xiagun and later became Duyang City of the Emperor Yu. Another example is the ancient city of Huaiyang in eastern Henan. Complete with walls and gates, it had drainage pipelines and rows of buildings, pottery kilns, tombs and burial pits. It was the economic and political center of the area at that time and was the "Ruins of Taihao" and the capital city of the Emperor Fuxi (another name of Taihao). During the Longshan culture period, people also had a more novel spiritual and cultural life. In many relics, "Bu Gu," pottery spinning wheels were discovered. "Bu Gu" is an animal bone used for divination, and the symbol of "Gua" was depicted in the wheels, indicating the rise of "Ba Gua" (Eight trigrams); also there is male genitalia patterns on some pottery and stone ware, indicating people's consciousness of ancestor worship.

From the perspective of the development of

the Yangshao culture and the Longshan culture, the Yellow River culture is the irreplaceable major power in the promotion of Chinese ancient civilization and played a crucial role in Chinese traditional culture which had immeasurable impact on the development and progress of the ancient Chinese society.

2.2 Examine closely the Yellow River culture from the perspective of ideology and culture

Starting from the Yangshao culture, Qijia culture, Longshan culture, Dawenkou culture, and Yellow River culture, through to the Xia culture, Shang culture, and the Zhou culture, the time span is more than 4,000 years, from the Neolithic Age to the Bronze Age, with a regional span of thousands of kilometers. It is the main body of the great Chinese culture with rich content and deep accumulation. The Central Plains culture is the centralized representative and the essence of the Yellow River culture. I stated the connotation of the Central Plains culture in the book, *The Central Plains Culture and the Rise of the Central Plains*, which includes eighteen cultures; the prehistoric culture, dragon culture, political culture, sage culture, ideological culture, celebrity culture, hero culture, farming culture, commercial culture, science and technology culture, medical culture, Chinese character culture, poetry culture, religious culture, drama culture, folk culture, martial art culture, and surname culture. These eighteen types of Central Plains culture are the basic content of the Yellow River culture. The Yellow River culture occupies a larger geographical scope than that of the Central Plains culture, including not only the middle reaches but the upper and lower reaches of the Yellow River, thus the former has a richer content than that of the latter like a nomadic, ethnic minority

and marine cultures, which are rare or indirect in the Central Plains culture. From my point of view, among so many colorful cultures, farming culture is the main vein, Heaven and man culture is the soul, ethic culture is the foundation, innovative culture is the true nature and Confucian and Taoist culture is the axis center. All of these have constituted the basic structure and the complete system of the ancient Chinese culture, highlighting the rich connotation and the distinctive features of the Yellow River culture. It is also worth noting that there was not only an increase in cultural types but an upgrading in cultural quality during the different development stages such as the Neolithic Age and the Bronze Age. For example, "dragon", the totem symbol of the Yellow River culture, only appeared as a spiritual worship in various patterns in people's lives in the late Neolithic period namely the Yangshao culture period. But with the appearance and development of bronze, "dragon" became the incarnation of the state's Emperor instead of pure spiritual worship. It is revealed in relevant ancient literature that there were three big evolutions in people's concept. *Yi Jing (the Book of Changes)* is the ruling outline in the three dynasties, namely Xia, Shang and Zhou. It had another name of *Lian Shan* in the Xia Dynasty, when people took the diagram Gen (represented the mountain) as the first one out of the 64 diagrams to express the worship of the mountain; it was called *Guizang* in the Shang Dynasty, when people took the diagram Kun (represented the Earth) as the first one out of the 64 diagrams to express the worship of the Earth; it was named *Zhouyi* in the Zhou Dynasty, when people took the diagram Qian (represented the Heaven) as the first one out of the 64 diagrams to express the worship of the Heaven. The Yaoci of the diagram "Qian" expounded the unremitting self-improvement spirit with "dragon" as the

metaphor. Therefore, all the emperors of different dynasties named themselves "Dragon", the "Son of Heaven" and the "Incarnation of Dragon". In this way, the worship of the Heaven and the dragon were combined in *Zhouyi*. "Heaven" is "Dragon", "Dragon" is the "Son of Heaven" and the "Son of Heaven" is the emperor. It showed that in the Yellow River culture there is an essential cultural change in the attitude towards dragon, from spiritual worship in the Neolithic Age to the worship of the Emperor in the Bronze Age.

2.3 The core values of the Yellow River culture

The Yellow River culture developed along a river basin, but it is not just a river basin culture. The Yellow River is the "Mother River" of the Chinese nation, where we formed, grew, expanded and prospered. In this sense, it is the representative culture of the Chinese nation, the national culture of China. When we explore the core values of the Yellow River culture, we are exploring the pursuit of value of the Chinese nation over thousands of years after the generation of the Yellow River culture in the ancient times, and the spiritual and cultural power dominating the social development and progress of China in such a long history. The core values generally contain spirits, thoughts and consciousness in five aspects, creation, people-orientation, humanity, benevolence and righteousness, and harmony and integration.

First is the creative consciousness. Creation refers to innovation, invention, development and progress. When the Yellow River culture was generated and developed, China was transitioning from the Neolithic Age to the Bronze Age and from a primitive society to a slave society. It was an era of big changes, upheavals and developments. During this historical period, creation became the theme of the times, and a distinctive feature of the

Yellow River culture. In the aspect of economic creation, the farming tools developed from single piece to the series of innovation and invention such as planting, management, collection and storage. Take pottery as an example, it developed from innovative inventions of variety and form through advances in technical levels and firing techniques. Another example is the change in materials used to make these wares, which developed from stone to metals like bronze and iron. In the aspect of cultural creation, there was innovative invention from the depiction of symbols to the production and application of mature characters like the inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells and on ancient bronze objects; musical instrument creation developed from a single piece to a series of musical instruments; ideology and culture developed from the original "self dialogue" to contention and integration of a hundred schools of thoughts; political creation developed from an abdication system to a hereditary system and from the original democratic path to an autocratic monarchy path; and architecture developed from the original tribal surrounding ditch settlements to the construction of cities. Cities have the functions of residence as well as being economic, political, cultural and military centers. There was an overall, constant creation at that time, which promoted productive development and social progress. As a result, creation is the primary embodiment of the core values of the Yellow River culture.

Second is the people-oriented assertion. The Yellow River culture originated in the late primitive society, when there was low productivity and poor production. To survive and develop, abundant food and vast territory was badly needed. People became the most important production tool and fighting force. A tribe's strength largely depended upon the quantity and quality of people. Lao Zi said, "As a consequence, the natural law, the

Heaven, the Earth and people are great. There are totally four greatnesses in the universe and people are one out of them." It is said in the *Analytical Dictionary of Characters*, "All the creatures in the world are generated by the breath and natural laws of the Heaven and the Earth, while people are the most respectable." Therefore, reproduction, cultivation, development and strengthening of people were the top priority in society, which was the source of the people-oriented thought of the Chinese nation. The tribe leaders and emperors gradually upgraded the simple people-oriented thought into civilization-oriented thought, starting from the interests of tribes, states and their own. The political assertion "people are superior to the ruler" was put forward, requiring rulers to show concern for the people, be close to the people, love the people, value the people and benefit the people. Otherwise, the society would be unstable and their sovereign would be overthrown and would become intolerable injustice. The civilization-oriented assertion is an important reflection of the core values of the Yellow River culture.

Third is the spirit of humanity. The humanistic spirit of the Yellow River culture is prominent, which is rooted from the significance and concern for people in the Yellow River culture. It was said in the *Yi Jing the Diagram Bi*, "couple hardness with softness, male with female, this is the nature; people are governed by civilization; the governor must observe natural law to adapt to seasonal transformation and humanity to promote civilization in the whole world." "Wen Ming Yi Zhi" here stands for governing by ritual music enlightenment instead of threat of forces." Observe humanity to promote civilization and formalities in the whole world" states the essence of "culture", namely to enlighten people by education and finally promote the development of civilization in the whole world. It can be seen

clearly that people attached great importance to "humanity" and equated it with "natural laws". In the text, it seems that "humanity" is actually more important than natural law, "Observe natural law to adapt to seasonal transformation," while "Observe humanity to promote civilization in the whole world." Apparently, the observation of "natural law" and "humanity" played different roles. Besides, this spirit of humanity reveals the difference in essence between the Chinese civilization and the western civilization. The former takes people as the main body, while the latter takes god as the main body. Consequently, in the development of the Chinese civilization, it always took valuing, cultivating, upgrading and improving people as the top priority. It has become a healthy social practice to worship ancestors, respect sages and love heroes, and an excellent tradition passed on from generation to generation to value studies, education and culture.

Fourth is benevolence and righteousness. Benevolence and righteousness is another important core value of the Yellow River culture. During the formation and development of the Yellow River culture, people thought highly of the moral cultivation with the core of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust. It emphasizes benevolent governance, righteous behaviors and being kindhearted to others. The five requirements run through every aspect in social life and penetrate into people's consciousness and mode of behaviors. In the *Book of Changes*, it is emphasized that, "The land is generous and gentle, and a gentleman should have virtuous beliefs and be inclusive of everything." Lao Zi asserts, "Not be bound with external objects or with selfishness and desire." The morality and integrity emphasized here is in a general sense. The morality in the *Book of Changes* refers to treating people generously, while the one

asserted by Lao Zi is to establish the peaceful and quiet internal ideological level. In the period of Confucius and Mencius, humanity and justice was explicitly proposed as the core of morality and integrity. The benevolent and righteous hearts and behaviors were more important than people's lives, as was put by Confucius, "sacrifice one's life for justice," "once you follow formalities for benevolence and righteousness, people will regard you as a benevolent person," and Mencius, "devote oneself to the course of justice." Regarding the specific orientation of moral construction, Lao Zi and Confucius differed from each other. In a dry pond a group of fish was struggling for survival. Confucius asserted that fish should "moisten each other with spit," to show benevolence and concern. By contrast, Lao Zi believed, "it is better for the fish to be strangers but live a free life instead of mutual help at critical moment." It means that we should create a more livable environment for the fish before the river goes dry. Although Lao Zi and Confucius each have a different focus on benevolence and righteousness, their pursuit and desire are the same. Therefore, benevolence and righteousness is not only a core value of the Yellow River culture, but the focus of the excellent traditional Chinese morality.

Fifth is the idea of harmony and integration. The spirit has multiple directions and lasts a long time in the Yellow River culture. As early as the end of the primitive society and the mid Yangshao Period, it was in the bud for this spirit, expecting intimate and harmonious relationships between people in the same tribe and between different tribes. After the appearance of Jiaguwen (inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells) and Jinwen (inscriptions on ancient bronze objects), there was the character of "He" (和). Only by realizing harmony between different things, can everything grow and develop; if there was

no difference, there would be no growth or development. The *Book of Songs* put forward the assertion, "brothers can unite to fight with external attacks despite of internal disputes." A rich statement of the thoughts and connotations of "he" was made in different perspectives by different philosophers in the time of the Warring States. Lao Zi said, "It is the common sense to be mild, and it is a sensible person to know the common sense." Confucius said, "Harmony is the most important in the practice of courtesy." Mencius said, "Favorable terrain outweighs favorable timing and climate, while support of the people outweighs favorable terrain." Guan Zi said, "With moral cultivation, social harmony and people unity will be realized." Mo Zi said, "The state can be governed with people deeply attached to each other," "everyone should be loved without any exclusion," and "all the people should obey the orders of the supreme ruler." Xun Zi said "There is natural law with everything in the world and everything grows in this harmonious world". In social practice, these thoughts of harmony and integration require kindness between people, concordance between people and Heaven, harmony between tribes, and peace between states. Seek common ground between thoughts while reserving differences between cultures. Between cultures variety should be maintained with good harmony. Up to now, a lot of things are tightly associated with the "harmony and integration" thought of the Chinese people and such thought is fully reflected in the Yellow River culture, including the great unity of China, the harmony of the Chinese nation, the multiple and integrated cultures, the one continuous line of the traditional Chinese culture and the sustainable development of China's five thousand years of civilization.

3. Comparison between the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture

Above I have made a detailed statement about the connotation and value of the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture. I will make a comparison between these two and clarify their relationship in the following for a better heritage and advancement of the cultures.

There are many agreements between these two cultures. First, there is the overlapping of time. The Yellow River culture is rooted from the Yangshao culture 5,000 to 7,000 years ago, covering the whole reaches of the Yellow River. The Yellow Emperor culture also took place during the Yangshao culture period and the main activity areas of the Yellow Emperor tribe included Henan, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Hebei, and Gansu. Second, though the time span, the information volume as well as variety of forms of the Yellow River are greater than those of the Yellow Emperor culture, they share common connotation and veneration from the perspective of the basic structure of thoughts. Third is their common essence. The essence of a culture lies in its core values. The core values of the Yellow Emperor culture are the spirits of innovation and pioneering, oriented on people, worship of virtue and morality, diligence and frugality, along with harmony and integration. The core values of the Yellow River culture are the spirits of creative consciousness, people-oriented assertion, humanity, benevolence and righteousness, and harmony and integration. Trends of these core values are consistent. Fourth is the same role. The leading roles of the Yellow Emperor culture are the powerful human ancestors, the Yellow Emperor and his important family members, in the period

of the Five Lords and times thereafter. It is they who led the people in the creation of the Yellow Emperor culture. The leading roles of the Yellow River culture are the same people at that time and the emperors and sages in the following dynasties. It is they who led the celebrities and the masses of common people in the creation of the Yellow River culture. The Yellow Emperor is the leading role in both of the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture. Fifth is the development direction. Both cultures share a consistent development direction, namely the products of the progressive productivity and social development. Both cultures make efforts to move forward for production development and social progress, which are always the most powerful driving forces.

Although there are so many agreements between the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture, the Yellow Emperor culture has its special significance.

3. 1 The Yellow Emperor culture is a special symbol.

Different from the Yellow River culture, the Yangtze River culture, the Liligang culture, the Yangshao culture, and the Longshan culture, the Yellow Emperor culture is a special cultural symbol, namely the ancestral root culture of our Chinese nation. It is the human ancestor of the Chinese nation, and the common spirit ancestor of the Chinese people. All of the Chinese people at home and abroad are proud of our identity as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor. The Yellow Emperor culture was created by the Yellow Emperor and his people. It nurtured the Chinese nation and the Chinese culture. In this sense, the Yellow Emperor culture is the ancestral root culture of the Chinese nation. Other cultures grow and develop on the basis of and under the influence of the Yellow Emperor. All the

This cultural recognition is bound to bring about national identity and cohesion as well as to bring people's hearts closer together.



influential cultures in China's history are rooted and supported by the Yellow Emperor culture in terms of their spiritual essence and core thinking, like the Taoist culture, the Confucian culture, the Mohist culture, and the legalist school culture. Consequently, the Yellow Emperor culture is a special cultural symbol, which is incomparable with other cultures, including the Yellow River culture.

3.2 The Yellow Emperor culture has special impact.

The impact of a culture is broad, deep and lasting. The special impact here refers to the impact that is not available with other types of cultures. The special impact of the Yellow Emperor culture is national cohesion and a national sense of identity. All the Chinese people are descendants of the Yellow Emperor, old or young, at home or abroad, rich or poor. In front of our common spiritual ancestor, all of us are the descendants of this grand old man. Since we are his descendants,

naturally we respect, worship, and miss the Yellow Emperor. Further we believe in, inherit and promote his culture. This cultural recognition is bound to bring about national identity and cohesion as well as to bring people's hearts closer together. This is the special impact of the Yellow Emperor culture, which is incomparable with other cultures including the Yellow River culture.

3.3 The Yellow Emperor culture enjoys a special status.

The Yellow Emperor culture is the strong force in the generation of the Yellow Emperor civilization and the latter one is the first ray of sunlight in the morning of the five thousand years' civilization of the Chinese nation and the first step from barbarism to civilization of China's social development. This is a splendid ray of sunlight and the great first step. It is the Yellow Emperor culture that forges the sunlight and the step, with outstanding achievements and prominent status. None of the other cultures including the Yellow

River culture enjoy such status. Before the times of the Yellow Emperor, there was much progress and many creations in the Peiligang culture during the Three Emperors times (three emperors refer to Sui Ren, Fu Xi and Shen Nong). They are the stars and highlights of the development of China's social civilization. However, the comparatively comprehensive overall development and progress took place in the times of the Yellow Emperor. Only during that time did the stars and the highlights converge on the first ray of the morning sun, and arise on the eastern horizon of China's ancient land. Therefore, the Yellow Emperor culture is the flame and source of the Yellow Emperor civilization and the Chinese civilization.

This special historical status is incomparable with other cultures.

Both of the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture are integral parts, the core, and the source of the excellent traditional Chinese cultures. They are mainly formed and developed in the Central Plains and Henan surrounding areas. The people of the Central Plains and Henan should cherish these two precious spiritual heritages and better pass on and promote the development, so as to serve and support Socialism with Chinese characteristics and the Chinese people and people around the globe. This is why I proposed that the people in Henan should carefully study the Yellow Emperor culture and the Yellow River culture.

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